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A SERIES OF SERMONS
ON THE
Sunday and Festival Lessons:

OR,
SERMONS

COMPOSED UPON TEXTS SELECTED FROM THE FIRST AND SECOND
LESSONS ALTERNATELY OF

Each Sunday and Great Festival Day

THROUGHOUT THE YEAR :

COMMENCING ON ADVENT SUNDAY, 1865.

BY THE
REV. E. G. WILLIAMS,
CHAPLAIN OF HER MAJESTY'S GAOL, SWANSEA.

VOLUME II.



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THIS
VOLUME OF SERMONS
IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED
TO HER GRACE
THE DUCHESS OF BEAUFORT,
IN ACKNOWLEDGMENT
OF HER EXCELLENT GOODNESS
IN PATRONIZING
THINGS OF A CHARITABLE AND USEFUL TENDENCY
IN THIS,
AS WELL AS OTHER LOCALITIES.

TO THE SUBSCRIBERS.

MY LORDS, LADIES, AND GENTLEMEN,—

AFTER considerable hesitation this second, and last Volume of the Series of Sermons is now offered for your kind acceptance. The writer feels that an apology is due for the delay in its publication, which has been chiefly occasioned by the undecided state of his mind respecting the propriety of intruding it upon the clemency of his friends, but having received a great number of pressing applications from the readers of the first volume, he has concluded it to be his duty, as well as his privilege, to complete the work to the close of the year.

He is glad to avail himself of the opportunity to express his sincere thanks for the gratifying testimony which he has received from many of you, and especially from those who have found the Sermons useful when prevented by circumstances from attending a place of public worship on the Lord's Day: he is thus encouraged to hope that they may, with a Divine blessing, continue to be of benefit to others when the tongue which has spoken them shall lie silent in death, and when the hand which has penned them shall lie mouldered into dust.

The same old plan of divisions and subdivisions has been observed throughout, from the conviction that such an arrangement is most conducive to give distinctiveness to the matter, and to aid the memory in retaining the substance of the subject under consideration.

The most of the leading doctrines entertained by the

Church of which the writer is proud to be an humble member are briefly treated : and while he has been anxious not to give "an uncertain sound," he hopes that he has carefully abstained from the use of language that might give offence to those who hold different views.

It has been suggested that the Sermons are too short for a public practical purpose : in answer to which, the statement made in the former volume may be repeated, namely, that the object was not to write an elaborate discourse, but to offer suggestive ideas—not to think for others, but to open the door for the exercise of thought. Besides, the writer has no ambition to make his brethren in the ministry his mouth-pieces ; for he does not presume to regard himself a model preacher. Still, should the Sermons be of service to beginners whose hard-working curacies afford but a limited time for study, he can only feel most thankful.

The last four Sermons will be found to be a deviation from the proposed order for the purpose of introducing a few subjects which do not occur in the regular course of the Lessons.

The whole is earnestly commended to the grace of Him who is able to work effectually by feeble instruments and simple means ; and the only favour asked from man is, not to condemn the work unread.

H.M. GAOL, SWANSEA,
August, 1866.

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A SERIES OF SERMONS

ON

THE SUNDAY AND FESTIVAL LESSONS.

Trinity Sunday.

MORNING SERVICE.—Second Lesson : Matt. iii.

Verses 16, 17.—“ *And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water : and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him : And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*”

THE existence of Three in One, and One in Three is beyond the capacity of finite wisdom. The world by wisdom knows not God. His character as a Triune Jehovah is not within the sphere of its theoretical teaching. The existence of a God, or of a Supreme Being, is taught by both creation and Providence, and forces itself on the convictions of the philosopher, as well as on the faith of the Christian : with such lucid evidences no one in a right state of mind can deny the Being of a God. The *unity* of God is also proved from the proportionate consistency of the works of nature, and the uniform developement of the arrangements of Providence :

but whilst a building denotes a builder, a structure of any kind denotes a constructor ; or whilst the co-operative action of machinery proves the operations of one designing power in its construction, still neither will declare the moral character of the individuals who set the whole in motion. Creation and Providence unite to testify the existence of one eternal Being, who must of necessity be infinitely powerful, wise, and good, but the real nature of that Being can no more be explained by these agencies than the moral character of a builder can be explained by the building which he has produced. The deficiencies in the teaching of nature are supplied by the teaching of revelation. Scripture comes to our aid, and teaches us that which we could not possibly otherwise know, which is, that the Being who made, and who supports the world, exists in three distinct persons, possessing one and the same essence ; that such distinctiveness of persons, and unity of essence, are not merely forms of speech, but a reality which, although we cannot comprehend, we are nevertheless called upon to believe.

The Jews, to whom the oracles of God were committed, deduce the doctrine of a triune Jehovah from the Old Testament Scriptures. Their commentators say, "There are three degrees in the mystery of Aleim or Elohim," these degrees they call persons. They say further, "They are all one and cannot be separated." "In the head of the Book," or in the first chapter of Genesis, the three Persons are distinctly mentioned as taking part in the production of creation. In the concise history which we have of the creation, Moses employs the phrase "Aleim (that is, Gods) created," more than thirty times, the noun being in the plural and the verb being in the singular number, which the Jewish Paraphraists explain by the terms *Jehovah* ; His *word*, or His *Son* ; and His *wisdom*, or His Holy Spirit, which they call three degrees. These three they assert are one inseparable Jehovah. In commenting on Deut. vi. 4, "Hear, O Israel : the Lord our God is one Lord," one of their writers says, "The *Lord*, and *one God*, and the *Lord*, are one. The Lord, or Jehovah,

is the beginning of all things, and the perfection of all things, and he is called the Father. The other, or one God, is the depth or foundation of science, and is called the Son. The other, or Lord, is the Holy Ghost, who proceeds from them both: therefore he says, 'Hear, O Israel:' that is, join together the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, and make them one essence or substance, for whatever is in the one is in the other, He hath been the whole, is the whole, and will be the whole." The whole tenor of the Jewish religion comprehended the doctrine of a Trinity in unity. The form of blessing used by their priests, and the solemn symbols which they employed to represent the Deity, show this to be an essential branch of their creed.

The heathen also, who must have received their information from tradition, have a notion of a Trinity of persons. The Hindoos have their *Brahma*, *Vishnu*, and *Seeva*. *Brahma* they consider to be the Father, or supreme source, *Vishnu* to be the Mediator, whom they assert to be incarnate; and *Seeva* to be the destroyer and regenerator. The Persians have their *Ormush*, *Mithr*, and *Ahriman*, holding the same distinct capacity as the Hindoo triad. The Egyptians acknowledged a triad who they called *Orisis*, *Isis*, and *Syphanis*, and whom they denoted by the symbols *light*, *fire*, and *Spirit*. The ancient Greeks also recognised a Trinity whom their philosophers called *three minds*, or three agents. The Scandinavians had a triad whom they called *Odin*, *Frea*, and *Thor*. The Romans, Germans, Gauls, Japanese and Chinese, and even the American Indians, held similar ideas of a triad of persons, which must have been originally derived from Divine revelation.

We cannot now trace the footsteps of the evidences left on record by the early Christian fathers in testimony of their unanimous belief in the doctrine of a Trinity of Persons possessing an unity of essence. But we shall come "to the word and the testimony" where in the New Testament the subject is fully substantiated by Christ Himself, and His apostles. Innumerable are the passages which declare

separately the existence and operations of the three Persons, whilst there are more than "two or three witnesses" representing them conjointly in one view. When our Saviour gave His last commission to His disciples, He told them to "teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." The form of the apostolic benediction was instituted by St. Paul in writing to the Corinthians, and is embodied in these expressive words: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost be with you all, Amen." In the first Epistle of St. John we have a passage, which some have denied to be of canonical authority, but which fully corresponds with the spirit of his writings both in his gospel and in his epistles. "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one." In the first chapter of the Apocalypse we find this comprehensive salutation: "Grace and peace from him that is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven spirits which are before his throne; and from Jesus Christ." Then in the text we have three Persons mentioned separately and acting combinedly. Here is Jesus coming up out of the water, having been baptized by John; here is the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him; and here is the Father uttering the voice from heaven, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

We shall now take the three Persons in the order in which they are mentioned, and call your attention briefly to the separate qualities of each, showing at the same time the combined unity which exists in them.

I. The first in the order of the text is the second Person under the name Jesus, whom we find observing a peculiar rite, as being necessary to His capacity in the Trinity.

1. The name Jesus, signifying a Saviour or Deliverer, represents the second Person in the peculiar position which He occupies in the blessed Trinity. When He is brought

before us under the name Christ, He is represented as being legally appointed and solemnly anointed to fill a special office ; then under the name Jesus He actually fulfils all the functions of the office to which He was appointed. I trust that it will not be presumptuous to illustrate the subject by a familiar simile, which, while it may give some idea of what is meant, must fall infinitely short of an adequate explanation of the reality. A, B, and C, have engaged in partnership to establish an important business, not for their own personal interest, but for the common good of the public. The three have equal shares, and are equally interested in carrying out the great object in view ; but so important is the undertaking that none but themselves can be engaged in conducting it. A engages to draw out the plans, and make all the preliminary arrangements ; B engages to carry the arrangements into operation ; and C engages to apply the benefits to the intended objects. Now, although the three are equal in natural position, and have equal shares in the undertaking, yet both B and C must be regarded inferior to A in its actual working, inasmuch as they are appointed by him, and are responsible to him for the manner in which the whole is conducted. Thus the man Christ Jesus is inferior to God the Father only in office ; in nature, as God the Son, He is equal, but being appointed to carry out the Divine arrangements as a Saviour and Deliverer, He made Himself responsible in the stupendous undertaking of man's redemption. The Son of God became Jesus in assuming the nature of man, without which the designs of the glorious Three could not have been perfected. St. Paul argues the point in His Epistle to the Philippians, "Who being in the form of God," &c. (Phil. ii. 6—11.)

2. We are taught that Jesus observed the rite of baptism to qualify Himself for the undertaking which He had engaged to accomplish. Baptism signifies two things—first, it is an outward sign of an inward cleansing from the corruption of a sinful nature ; and secondly, it is an introduction into a state of Church membership, by which our union with God

and with all the blessed company of heaven is represented. Jesus did not require the rite to secure either of these two objects in Himself; but it behoved Him to be made in all things like unto His brethren. Having condescended to take upon Himself the actual position of the man, it was necessary that He should submit to all things (the guilt of sin excepted) to which a sinful man must be subject. In answer to John's scruples, Jesus said, "Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." It was necessary, therefore, to own every Divine institution, particularly the righteousness of the ceremonial law, which required the washing of the priests in water when they entered upon that office. Whatever the law required in order to perfect righteousness that our Saviour fulfilled in most absolute perfection. This was also done by way of example to us. If it behoved Him to fulfil the righteousness of the *ceremonial* law in evidence of His readiness to submit for man, it is our duty and interest to fulfil the righteousness of the *moral* law as an evidence of our seeking to be righteous in the sight of God. "He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous."

II. The next in the order of the text is the third Person under the name of "the Spirit of God," and the manner in which He is here represented shows the distinctiveness of His office, and the necessity of His operation. The descent of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus is an evidence that He is not a quality or an operation, but a *Person*, and a Person really distinct from the Father and the Son. As a separate Person He has a separate office, which is the application of Divine benefit to the mind. He quickens the mind, enlightens the mind, guides the mind, strengthens the mind, comforts and cheers the mind. For this object He descends from heaven, He descended upon the Apostles on the day of Pentecost, and upon three thousand of their hearers on the same day. In the same manner He descends still in connection with the means of grace, and the ordinances of the sanctuary. But

why did the Holy Spirit descend upon Christ, as He being truly and really God, did not require any of the operations which we have enumerated? We shall mention two reasons :—

1. For the designation of His Person, showing thereby that He was the identical Person set apart for the work and office of Mediator and Deliverer. Hitherto the Divine nature was quiescent in Jesus, so that during His residence with His parents at Nazareth no one could distinguish (except by His extraordinary wisdom and obedience) that He was different from any other individual; but now that He was entering upon His public ministry it was necessary that a public manifestation be given of His peculiar character. Thus the Holy Ghost descended upon Him differently from all others. When He descended upon the Apostles, He descended visibly indeed, but was accompanied by “a rushing mighty wind, and there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire;” when He descended upon Jesus, He came like a dove, calmly and easily, indicating that nothing more was necessary than a visible manifestation of His being the true Messiah.

2. The Spirit descended upon Him for the qualification of His person for the performance of His office. The *Son of God* needed no qualifying operation, but the *Man Jesus* did, as He was in every sinless respect a *Man*; and thus, according to the ancient prophecies, He was anointed with the holy unction which designated His appointment above His fellows to be the King, Priest, and Prophet of His Church. As none could fill those offices until they had undergone the ceremony of unction, so it was necessary that our Saviour should undergo the ceremony in an extraordinary degree, that He might be legally and fully qualified for the task which He had undertaken to perform. The Spirit descended just as the heavens were opened, indicating that *that* heaven which was closed against us by sin, is now opened for the descent of the Spirit to purify us from sin.

III. The First Person in the blessed Trinity is here brought

before us third in order. When Jesus had ascended out of the water, having been baptized by John, and the Spirit having descended and lighted upon Him, "Lo! a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." The First Person is represented by a voice from heaven. This was a supreme voice, a voice of authority, the voice of God. It was long since the voice of the First Person was heard directly by man, probably not since the sin of the first Adam closed the gates of paradise against himself and his posterity. God spoke to man, it is true, between those two epochs. He spoke to Cain by way of reproof; He spoke to Noah by way of warning and instruction; He spoke to Abraham, and to Moses, and to Samuel, and to Elijah, and to all the prophets; but it is thought that He communicated with these saints through the medium of the Second Person in anticipation of His coming to "open the kingdom of heaven to all believers;" but now, heaven being opened by the mission of Jesus to earth, and the Spirit of God having set His seal to His mission, God the Father seems to communicate with man directly from the throne of heaven, that every doubt might be infallibly removed respecting the identity and work of the Second Person.

The burden of the voice therefore was, first, to establish the identity of Jesus; and secondly, to show the Divine pleasure in the mission which He was about to execute.

1. The identity of Jesus as the Second Person was thus established. "*This is my beloved Son.*"

The title, Son of God, is applied to Adam, to the angels, to civil officers, to the Jewish nation, and to all that are partakers of Divine grace, being adopted into the family of God; but it is applied to Jesus in a special sense, He being the Son of God differently from all others; He is His natural and eternal Son, possessing an essence identical with His own, so that that nature is indivisible in the Father and the Son. Regarding the First and Second Persons in the relationship of Father and Son, the question may be asked, How, in such a case, can their co-eternal existence be established? We cannot

presume to explain how three distinct Persons, the Second being begotten of the First, and the Third proceeding from both, could have co-existed eternally without any priority of being; but we can form some idea how the essence of one co-existed with the essence of the other, if we regard it in a similar light to that of which St. Paul speaks, when he says that Levi was in the loins of his father, Abraham, three generations before he was born, or when we consider that all mankind, even to the end of the world, were in the loins of Adam as soon as he came from under the hands of his Maker, he being the representative of his race. These may be considered figures too gross to illustrate the sublime ideas of the distinctive eternity of the Father and Son, but they may supply us with a faint conception of the fact. We must, indeed, acknowledge ourselves vanquished; the mystery is too deep for finite minds to fathom; it is one of the secret things which belong to the Lord our God. Scripture, however, represents Christ as being the Son of God prior to His appearance in the flesh. His miraculous conception, His resurrection from the dead, and His ascension into heaven, were only evidences of His Divine Sonship. The mysterious relationship existed before, and by way of distinction from all others, God calls Him His *beloved* Son, and His *only-begotten* Son.

2. The Voice declares the Divine pleasure in the mission which Jesus came to execute: "In whom I am well pleased." The Father was always pleased with the Son. Through the prophet Isaiah He speaks of Him as His servant in whom His soul delighted, and He was not ashamed to declare His delight openly when He was in a state of humiliation. The same declaration was repeated in the presence of His disciples at the transfiguration on the mount. He was well pleased not only in all that He was, but also in all that He did. He was pleased with His devotedness in engaging to honour the Divine attributes in man's salvation. He was pleased with His condescension in assuming man's nature. He was pleased with His perfect obedience to the Divine law. He

was pleased with the purity of His innocence, with His zeal in the performance of the task which He undertook, with His submission to the Divine will, with the atonement which He effected for man's sin; and He is pleased with the penitent sinner for His sake. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." The expression announces perfect satisfaction with all connected with the fact.

In conclusion. Let us admire the condescension of God in revealing Himself to us in His Word as the Triune Jehovah, and when we cannot comprehend the mysteries of His nature, let us learn to exercise faith in His declarations, being assured that He, being a God who cannot lie, whatever He states must be consistent with truth.

We may learn also the high value which God attaches to the soul of man, inasmuch as an eternal Trinity of Persons should be engaged in its rescue. Fathèr, Son, and Holy Ghost could not have been employed in a mere trifle when undertaking to deliver man at so great a cost. Do you, sinner, ruin your own soul, and sell it to Satan for worse than nothing, not considering the consequences of your action? Do pause and think; depend upon it, the loss must be fearful in the estimation of God, and ought to be so in yours.

Trinity Sunday.

EVENING SERVICE.—First Lesson : Gen. xviii.

Verse 2.—“ *And he lift up his eyes and looked, and lo, three men stood by him : and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground.*”

ABRAHAM was the friend of God. Few men whose histories are recorded in the sacred Scriptures were so distinguished as was Abraham. He appeared to be the peculiar object of the Almighty's attention and care, to whom He communicated more of His future designs than to any other individual saint in flesh. If you carefully read the history of this patriarch, you will find that, in addition to the necessary instructions given for the regulation of his personal conduct, in all the Divine communications to him a promise was involved containing some unprecedented advantages to himself and posterity, and it was the fact of Abraham's believing those promises without having a precedent to go upon which established his character as the “father of the faithful.” There were delays made in the fulfilment of promises for the sole purpose, as we may presume, of testing his faith and proving his obedience. Notwithstanding all discouragements, Abraham continued to believe and to obey, and his “faith was counted to him for righteousness.”

In this chapter we have a communication assuming a different aspect from any that preceded it ; if it was not equal to some others in majesty and grandeur, it certainly exceeded all in familiarity and freedom. Here we have a Trinity coming down in form to hold an interview with the patriarch ; not a Divine *Trinity*, it is true ; but what Abraham thought to be three men, who turned out to be three angels, one of

whom being unquestionably Divine, the Angel of the Covenant, the Lord Jesus Christ, accompanied by two of the heavenly host, either to represent a Trinity of persons, or to perform a threefold act, which was to give information to Abraham, to destroy the cities of the plain, and to deliver Lot. That one of the three heavenly visitants was a Divine person seems evident from his being specially distinguished by Abraham from the other two. He addresses Him "My Lord," or "Jehovah," which is an incommunicable name of God. The onus of the whole conversation seemed to rest upon Him, as the most prominent person of the three, who, whilst the other two proceeded towards Sodom, remained to converse with Abraham, who still calls Him "Lord," and intercedes with Him for the preservation of the cities.

Whilst the text and its context teach us the condescension of God in sending His three angels, including His Son, to communicate with Abraham, they extend to furnish us with some useful instructions respecting the ministering spirits whom He has around His throne, together with His goodness in employing them for the benefit of man.

We shall therefore remark—

— I. That angels are God's ministering spirits.

It is but little we know of those spiritual intelligences, and the little we do know is founded entirely upon the declarations of God's Word.

Here, however, we are taught—

1. That they are spiritual in their nature. Being spiritual they are not affected by time, and do not require space to exist. Their nature is similar to the soul of man when divested of the material body, with the exception that they are of a higher order in rank and intelligence. Their spiritual nature is asserted by the Psalmist when he says, "Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire," and by St. Paul when he asks, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" Some have thought that angels are not mere spirits,

but that they are invested with some kind of aerial bodies, both to enable them to appear unto man, and to distinguish them from the Supreme Being, who is a pure, unmixed Spirit; but the most generally received opinion is, that they are purely incorporeal spirits, only assuming borrowed bodies when sent on a mission to man in the flesh.

2. Those spiritual intelligences are endowed with exalted excellencies. They are represented as being strong, wise, swift, and, above all, holy. David called them "His angels, that excel in strength." We cannot define their strength, but we know that in a night one angel destroyed one hundred and eighty-five thousand men in the camp of the Assyrians. To distinguish their wisdom it is said to David, "My Lord is wise, according to the wisdom of an angel of God, to know all things that are in the earth." To indicate their swiftness they are described as having wings, and the Prophet Ezekiel says that they run and return as a "flash of lightning." Respecting their holiness, our Saviour says, "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory." All these excellencies combine to qualify them for the exalted service to which they have been appointed. They would not have been adapted to serve God in the beauty of holiness, nor to administer to the saints in obedience to His will, had there been a deficiency in any of the named qualifications.

3. They are many in number. We cannot tell how many, but to them is applied the highest number mentioned in Scripture. In the book of Psalms we are told, "The chariots of God are twenty thousands, even thousands of angels." In the book of Daniel we are told, "A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him, thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him." In the book of Revelation we read, "And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands." Neither passage is intended to

define the exact number, but each to express a vast multitude; such a multitude, doubtless, as that seen by St. John redeemed from among "all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues," "a great multitude which no man could number."

4. There are gradations in their positions in heaven. Some count nine, which are archangels, thrones, dominions, principalities, authorities, powers, cherubim, and seraphim, and others of an inferior order. If it be so, such are ordained for divinely wise purposes, it may be that order and regularity may be combined with dignity and magnificence. We would not speculate beyond the declarations of God's Word; if those different appellations are intended to represent various classes, they have not been so ordered in vain. God has His designs thus to accomplish for the furtherance of His own glory and the welfare of His Church; for we are assured that they are "*all*," however high their order and exalted their station, they are "all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them that shall be heirs of salvation."

This leads us to observe—

II. That those angels are employed in God's goodness for the benefit of man.

The angels are not merely holy beings created at the pleasure of the Almighty for the sole purpose of surrounding His throne with magnificent intelligences who should for ever be ornaments of glory, and instances of the display of Divine power and wisdom; God has intended them for additional purposes, and those purposes are to wait upon His commands in serving the inhabitants of His vast dominions, both in this world and in others of which we know nothing.

Respecting our world we may remark—

1. That the services of angels are employed for the whole in *general*. This seems to be indicated in the vision of Ezekiel by the river Chebar. In that vision the general providence of God over the world is represented by wheels turning wheel within a wheel. Those wheels were conducted

by living creatures of peculiar appearances and of peculiar powers, and still those living creatures were guided by a power above themselves. In the nineteenth and twentieth verses of the first chapter of Ezekiel you will read, "And when the living creatures went the wheels went by them; and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth the wheels were lifted up. Whithersoever the Spirit was to go they went, thither was their spirit to go, and the wheels were lifted up over against them: for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels." This remarkable machinery is evidently intended to show that God's superintendence over the world is carried on through the ministration of angels. In reading the Scriptures we meet with various instances where they were employed to execute the will of God upon earth, both by way of mercy, and by way of judgment. Three angels appeared unto Abraham to reveal the designs of Jehovah, two of the same angels delivered Lot from Sodom. An angel visited Gideon; also Manoah and his wife. Through the ministration of angels the law was proclaimed on Mount Sinai. The prophecies of Daniel, of Zechariah, and St. John were given through the medium of angels. An angel was sent to declare to the shepherds on the plains of Bethlehem, "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be unto all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." Angels are said to minister unto Him during His sojourn upon earth; neither did they forsake His apostles after His ascension to heaven; they attended upon them in the midst of persecutions, and, as in the case of Peter, delivered them from their enemies.

Again. Angels are said to be employed to execute God's judgments in the world. They were the agents in the instance of Sodom and Gomorrah; in the instance of the first-born in Egypt; in the instance of the Assyrians, when one hundred four score and five thousand men were slain in the camp; in the instance of the Israelites, when David numbered the people; in the instance of Herod, when he impiously

appropriated to himself the glory which pertained only to God. And our Saviour declares that "so it shall be in the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire. There shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth."

2. Angels are employed for the benefit of God's people in *particular*. It is beyond our power to state the extent of their services to the saints on earth, or what peculiar benefits are conferred upon them here through their ministration. Some affirm that each individual saint has his attendant angel; and this notion is not without confirmation by the Word of God. In St. Matthew we find that Christ told His hearers, "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones, for I say unto you, that in heaven *their angels* do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven." In the Acts of the Apostles we find that when it was told the assembled Church, Peter, whom they thought to be firmly confined in prison, was standing and knocking at the door, they said, "It is his angel." There is nothing improbable in this individual attendance of angels; for, considering God's love for His children, and the number of ministering spirits at His disposal, no necessary attention is omitted to secure their peace and safety. It is a most cheering idea to those who are subject to the infirmities of flesh and the turmoils of life to think that they are constantly waited upon by those whose special duty it is to watch over them. When surrounded by dangers and assaulted by enemies, the servant is at hand to defend and protect in time of need.

However this may be, we are assured, for we can refer to chapter and verse, that "the angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them." When Abraham sent his servant to seek a wife for his son Isaac, he said unto him, "The Lord before whom I walk will send his angel with thee, and prosper thy way." An angel delivered the Israelites from their enemies on various occasions. An angel delivered Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from

the fiery furnace, and Daniel from the lions' den. An angel spoke words of comfort to Zechariah and to Mary. An angel delivered Peter from prison, and defended the apostles in times of danger. Those are not isolated cases, in which God sent angels on special missions to vindicate His care over His people in a miraculous manner; it is a fact of general application that the angels are "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation." The Psalmist insists upon this when he says, "There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come near thy dwelling, for he shall give his angels charge over thee; they shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone." Not only in life, but also in death, do angels take charge of God's people. When the soul departs from the body, as is proved in the case of Lazarus, it is taken by angels into glory. They also will be the agents to collect the saints together from the four corners of the world to meet their Lord in the air when He shall come to judge the quick and the dead; for "he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."

There are a few important lessons to be learnt from the subject before us.

The first is, that God must set a high value on the inhabitants of this world before He would employ beings of so exalted an order to serve for their good. We are not led to understand how far those holy beings interfere with other worlds, but from the creation of ours they have been constantly employed in carrying out God's designs, both in mercy and in judgment; perhaps more especially here, as it is the platform on which the greatest events of God have been executed. As He made it the scene of suffering to His own Son that He might express His appreciation of its fallen inhabitants, He carries out His purposes of love by employing the highest within His realm for their good.

We may learn also that God intends none of His creatures to be idle; their happiness does not consist in idleness, but in

activity and usefulness. The highest and happiest creatures that He created were ministering spirits. They have nothing to trouble them, and nothing to wish for but what they possess; still they are serviceable, and are serviceable to those who are beneath themselves in position and intelligence. They do not despise the service of administering to Job in his affliction; to Daniel in the lions' den; and to Peter in the prison. We might learn a lesson from this, and not consider ourselves above performing the most menial service for God. If the example of angels be not a sufficient inducement, surely that of the Lord of angels should be. When He, according to the arrangements of the blessed Trinity, came down to earth, He thought it not too great to stoop even to wash the feet of His disciples. We are thus encouraged to adore God's name, to admire God's goodness, and to imitate God's example.

The First Sunday after Trinity.

MORNING SERVICE.—First Lesson : Josh. x.

Verse 12.—“ *Then spake Joshua to the Lord in the day when the Lord delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon.*”

GIBEON was a city situated upon a hill, about five miles to the north of Jerusalem, and Ajalon was another city lying to the south-west of Gibeon. Both places have been rendered famous in sacred history by the miraculous interposition of Divine Providence in behalf of the Israelites and their confederates, in answer to the prayer of Joshua. The history connected with the circumstance is most interesting. The inhabitants of those places, being alarmed by the wonderful progress of the Israelites, came to meet them in old clothes and with mouldy provisions, as if they had come from a far country, and begged that they would enter into a league with them. After making some objections, the Hebrew princes, without consulting the Lord, complied, and partook of their provisions as a testimony of their friendship. On coming to their cities a few days afterwards, the Hebrews discovered their mistake, and charged the Gibeonites with the fraud, and they pleaded in excuse their impending danger of utter destruction. By the terms of the league, their lives were spared, but Joshua condemned them to the servile work of hewing wood, and drawing water for the use of the congregation.

This covenant with the Israelites was regarded an act of perfidy on the part of the Gibeonites by the neighbouring nations, five of whom immediately took up arms against

them; but Joshua protected them, and by the help of God, destroyed their enemies.

That a most remarkable miracle was wrought on this occasion no one can pretend to deny. The object of such a miracle must have had some great ends to serve besides affording time and light to conquer the few kings and their armies who stood in opposition to Joshua; for provided the swords of the Israelites could not have dispatched the whole number, the tremendous storm of hailstones by which so many died whilst fleeing to Azekah might, at the same time, have destroyed every man in the camp. God, however, as at all times, had His ends to accomplish. What those ends were we can but conjecture. Probably He wished to magnify Joshua in the estimation of the Israelites by manifesting an unwonted phenomenon in answer to his prayers, so that they might henceforth place implicit confidence in his leadership. Or, as Matthew Henry says, He would hereby notify to all the world what He was doing for His people Israel in Canaan. The sun, the eye of the world, must be fixed for some hours upon Gibeon and the Valley of Ajalon, as it were, to contemplate in wonder the great works of God for His people, and so to engage the children of men from other parts to look that way, and to enquire of this wonder in the land; for if the course of nature was suspended to give two days' consecutive light in Canaan, the same period of light or darkness must have universally existed in other parts, which would naturally produce great enquiry among the nations of the earth. Or, perhaps God wished to strike terror into the hearts of the remaining Canaanites, that they might fall an easy prey into the hands of the encouraged Israelites.

There are two things worthy of special notice in the circumstance—first, the care of Providence; and secondly, the potency of prayer.

I. The care of Providence over the affairs of man is here manifested.

We need no arguments, we might hope, to convince every-

one present of the existence of a Divine Providence. You all, I trust, believe that there is a Providence exercised in the world. The Deist may tell you that there is not. He will acknowledge indeed that there is a God, but thinks that He is too sublime and exalted to notice this little insignificant world of ours. He will tell you that God at first made the world, when He wound it up like a watch or a clock, and then let it work by the force of its own machinery without any further superintendence until the weights go down, when all will come to an end. To get rid of his difficulties respecting the extraordinary occurrences which take place in it, he will tell you that everything occurs by accident or chance. Chance! What is chance? It is an empty word without any meaning except in the corrupt recesses of an infidel mind, if you attach to it the idea that things happen in our world without the control of a Supreme Being. Rather than adopt such a pernicious, soul-destroying notion, let us believe Ezekiel, when he tells us of the vision which he saw by the River Chebar. In that vision was presented to him the appearance of wheels, supported and guided by living creatures; above the living creatures was a firmament, above the firmament was a throne, and upon the "throne was as the likeness of a man above upon it." Or let us believe the word of the Lord, that came to Zechariah, saying, "They are the eyes of the Lord, which run to and fro through the whole earth." In regarding this Providence we may observe—

1. That it is both general and special.

By God's general Providence we understand His ordinary superintendence of all the affairs of Creation, whereby all things are guided, counteracted, and overruled. In this respect He dwells in all space, regulates every object, so that the minutest insect, as well as the largest luminary, is directed by His power and wisdom. Thus He governs all, and supplies the wants of all. The young ravens cry unto Him, and are satisfied; the beasts of the forest receive their food from His bountiful beneficence; the fowls of the air, that neither sow nor reap, nor gather into barns, are fed by

"Our Heavenly Father;" the lilies of the field, that neither toil nor spin, are decked by Him in superior raiment than "even Solomon in all his glory;" and a sparrow falls not to the ground without His notice. Man also, independent of his character, is the object of His general care. In "Him we live, move, and have our being." His arm is underneath us, His hand is extended to supply our wants, He protects us from danger and harm, provides us with homes, friends, and comforts. "He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." St. Paul, in addressing the idolatrous Lycaonians, refers especially to God's general Providence, when he says, "Nevertheless He left not Himself without witness, in that He did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness." There is not an instance in which He has violated His promise to Noah after the deluge, "While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease." In acknowledging God, in thus providing for us, we must call upon our soul and all that is within us to bless His holy name, for whatever has been our conduct towards Him, His conduct towards us has been invariably kind and good.

In addition to this general superintendence there is a special Providence interposing in behalf of certain individuals, under certain circumstances, for certain designs. Perhaps instances of those special Providences cannot be selected so definitely in our day as under previous dispensations, for the reason that in the absence of an ample written revelation, God formerly revealed His ways more directly to the senses of men; still there are some circumstances within the personal experiences of every true child of God, and there are many recorded on the pages of modern history in which we can trace something beyond an ordinary Divine superintendence; but this I believe is never exercised except in behalf of the good, or to further some great design which the Almighty has in view to accomplish.

By a special Providence I mean such as is impossible for man to calculate according to the fixed laws of nature, and consequently involves the performance of an actual miracle. Such was the instance before us. Joshua and the Israelites fought against the Amorites according to the ordinary practice of warfare. The victory, according to the ordinary course of things, might have been doubtful, the forces being nearly equal. But God had His designs to fulfil, and so interposed in a special manner—first, by opening the artillery of heaven, and showering upon the enemy destructive bolts of hailstones, which fatally struck one party, whilst the other party, though in close pursuit, was not touched. Then, to allow His friends full time to complete the victory, He ordered the course of nature to be stayed. The sun stood still in Gibeon, and the moon in the Valley of Ajalon, until the last of the foe was slain. Many similar cases might be mentioned, did our space allow; but we cannot pass by the extraordinary Providential circumstances of our Saviour's birth, life, and death. All the special forces of Providential interposition were joined to contribute to the furtherance of God's designs in working out man's redemption through Him. From the baffling of Herod, after the birth at Bethlehem, to the discomfiture of the Jews at the Resurrection from the new grave of Joseph, we can trace the footsteps of a special Providence in making all things work together to effect one great end.

2. God exercises His Providence through the instrumentality of means. Placing those means at the disposal of man, He works with him, but does not excuse him from doing what is within his power. The swords of the children of Israel killed, but the hailstones killed more. Joshua had to exert all his powers, travelling all night from Gilgal, and fighting all day against the Amorites (the day being extended to the length of two) until the victory was won. We have a parallel instance in the case of Gideon and his three hundred men fighting against the Midianites. Those enemies were vanquished by the power of God; but the people were to

break their pitchers, and exhibit their lamps, to blow in their trumpets, and shout, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon." By the use of means the Israelites were delivered from Egypt; by the use of means they crossed the Red Sea, and were supported in the wilderness; by the use of means they went over Jordan; by the use of means (though simple ones) the walls of Jericho fell; by the use of means the natives were subdued before them; by the use of means the Lord Jesus Christ worked out our redemption; by the use of means the world is to be reduced under the influence of the Gospel; by the use of means the soul is fitted for glory; by the use of means also every arrangement of Providence is effected. "God giveth the increase;" but man must plant, and man must water.

3. God often effects His designs of Providence by means intended by man for different purposes. Joseph's brethren sold him to Egypt with the view of frustrating his dreams; but Providence ordered that through those very means his dreams should be realized. Pharaoh's daughter brought up Moses in the Egyptian court, and got him educated in all the sciences of the country, with the object of placing him upon the throne of the Pharaohs; but Providence ordered that by being thus trained he should be fitted to subvert that throne and ruin the nation. Haman framed his plans to hang Mordecai, and to destroy the Jews throughout all the provinces of Persia and Media; but Providence ordered that those plans should be conducive to the exaltation of Mordecai and the prosperity of the Jews, whilst Haman should be hanged on his own gallows. The Jews crucified Jesus of Nazareth to put an end to His pretensions respecting the Messiahship; but Providence ordered that His crucifixion should be the very means to establish His claim. The enemies of Christianity drove its promoters from prison to prison to root out their doctrines; but Providence ordered that thereby the knowledge of the Gospel should spread to all nations. The art of printing, the invention of the compass, the production of steam apparatus, and the other discoveries

of science were intended by man to further commerce and to promote worldly interests; but Providence has ordered that they shall all be made subservient to the spread of Divine truth among all nations, and to the exaltation of Christ crucified upon earth.

Finally, God sometimes goes out of His ordinary course in Providence to serve His people. If necessary to their safety and interests, every object in nature shall be enlisted in their favour. Rather than the Egyptians shall overtake Israel, the Red Sea shall be divided to make them a way of escape. Rather than they shall die of hunger and thirst in the wilderness, heaven shall shower down bread, and "the flinty rock" shall yield water in abundance for their sustenance. Rather than they shall fail to enter the promised land, Jordan shall be rent in twain to give them a free passage. Rather than they shall fail to vanquish their foes, the sun shall stand still a whole day upon Gibeon, and the moon in the valley of Ajalon. Rather than Daniel and the Hebrew children shall perish, the lions shall forget their instincts, and the fire shall withhold its devastating power. Rather than there shall be a lack of evidences to the Divine mission of the Son of God, the rocks shall rend, the graves shall open, and the sun shall grow dim at His death. Rather than an apostle shall be kept in prison, his chains shall fall off, and the gates shall open of their own accord for his deliverance. Rather than a nation destined to benefit the world shall be enslaved, a whole Armada shall be shattered by the winds and waves for its safety. And rather than Christ shall fail to "make his ways known upon earth," and "his saving health unto all nations," heaven and earth shall be enlisted in His favour. The Prophet Habakkuk, in strains of poetic beauty, celebrates such events as these, including the instance before us. "Thou didst cleave the earth with rivers. The mountains saw thee, and they trembled: the overflowing of the water passed by: the deep uttered his voice, and lifted up his hand on high. The sun and moon stood still in their habitation:

at the light of thine arrows they went, and at the shining of thy glittering spear." (Hab. iii. 9—11.) "All things work together for good to them that love God."

II. We observe briefly the power of prayer to command God's Providence. "The fervent prayer of the righteous man availeth much." So it did in this case; so it did in the case of Jacob; so it did in the case of Moses; so it did in the case of Elijah: so it did in the case of Hannah; so it did in the case of David; so it did in the case of Hezekiah; so it did in the case of Daniel; so it did in the case of the apostles; so it does in the case of every sincere, faithful child of God. Our Saviour assured His disciples, "Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you."

In regard to the prayer of Joshua, we may remark that it was both private and public.

1. It was private. "Then spake Joshua unto the Lord." Prayer is the language of the heart speaking unto the Lord. This was the kind of prayer which Moses offered at the Red Sea, when God said unto him, "Why criest thou unto me?" There was no audible expression of words in that prayer of Moses, but it was the silent aspiration of the heart. Our Father, who sees in secret, requires no words to become acquainted with the desires of His people. He can hear the sigh, can observe the wish. The silent emotion of prayer is often far more acceptable to Him than the best arranged expressed form of words. Such was the first emotion of Joshua's heart in his emergency. He lifted up his soul in secret to God, and silent prayer strengthened his faith and gave him confidence; consequently he

2. Ventured publicly to make a bold request in the presence of all the people. And "he said in the sight of all Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon, and thou moon in the Valley of Ajalon."

This seems more like a command than a request, and Joshua would not have presumed to utter it thus publicly if he had not been inspired with confidence to use the expression. But in answer to his private prayer God gave him the assurance that his request should be granted, and thus his faith took this extraordinary reach. Private prayer always constitutes a strong faith. Those men who aim at great spiritual things, and are successful in what they attempt, are men mighty with God in private prayer. It was when Jacob retired to pray privately that he conquered with God, and succeeded to surmount all his difficulties. Christ Himself often resorted to private prayer. Thus He obtained strength as *man* to perform the prodigious task which He had undertaken as *Mediator*. Brethren, if you would be useful and successful in doing a great work for God and your fellow-men, have frequent recourse to private prayer. It is the man of the closet who is the truly successful man of life.

We may remark in conclusion, as God condescends to go out of His way in providence to serve us, may we not think it too much to go out of our way to serve Him. He has made sacrifices for us, may we make sacrifices for Him. May we consider also that if we would have God's presence with us we must pray for it. He will be sought by us. Those who seek Him shall find Him. May we always use in substance the prayer of Joshua, "Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon, and thou moon in the Valley of Ajalon."

The First Sunday after Trinity.

EVENING SERVICE.—Second Lesson: 2 Cor. i.

Verse 22.—“*Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.*”

THE promises of God are co-extensive with the wants of His people. They are positive in their nature, they are broad in their application, and they are lasting in their effects. There is no circumstance into which the child of God can be brought but that he will find a promise adapted to his case tending to animate and console his mind in the midst of the changes of life. Like the bright beam of the sun bursting through the darkness of a thunderstorm do these promises penetrate through the clouds of human sorrow, and, with a life-giving influence, they cheer us onward in our heavenly course. On the positiveness and unchangeableness of God's promises the apostles founded the doctrines which they preached to the world. There was, therefore, no inconstancy and uncertainty in what they taught; they did not affirm a thing at one time and deny it at another. “But as God is true,” St. Paul declares in this chapter, “our word toward you was not yea and nay, for the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you, was not yea and nay, but in him yea.” Inasmuch as God is faithful and true, never deceiving nor promising that which He does not perform, so true is it that there is no fickleness and changeableness in the preaching of Christ, whom we have held forth among you as the centre in which all God's promises meet, and the stay in which they are invariably fixed. “For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.” All the promises which God has made to His people are made in Christ and

ratified by Him. Christ acts the part and office of a surety ; He undertakes and engages for God that whatever He has promised shall be made good to us. In Him they are yea, and in Him Amen.

The security for the positiveness of the Gospel, and for the steadfastness of those who believe the Gospel, is this. "Now he which establisheth us with you in Christ and hath anointed us, is God." Being thus established by one who cannot change, and being anointed by the sanctifying grace of His Holy Spirit, we are assured of the final result. Though we are naturally like reeds shaken with every wind, in God we shall be made like pillars, strong and firm to withstand the most violent blast ; though we are naturally cold and indifferent to all that is holy and good, by Him we are consecrated to the best of purposes ; and as the anointing oil refreshes, heals, comforts, beautifies, and strengthens, so shall we be made partakers of all the internal virtues and external excellences which His sanctifying grace can bestow. He has done more for us than even this, "Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." He has set His seal upon us as His own, and as such has given us a pledge of our future happiness.

This is a most encouraging portion of Holy Writ. It brings before us, First, God's seal upon, and Secondly, God's pledge unto His people.

I. We have God's seal upon His people. "Who hath also sealed us." The reference is evidently to the various usages in which a seal is employed in the transactions of life. It is used to close up letters and books, to set them apart for the sole purposes of the owner ; the seal indicates that they are not to be scanned by every prying eye, not to be read by every curious mind, and not to be handled by every unhallowed hand. The owner has some peculiar purposes for their use, and they are thus dedicated entirely to his service. When God imparts His Spirit to the soul, it is an indication that that soul is consecrated by Him to Himself

for His own peculiar service. "The Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself." By setting the seal of the Spirit in his heart He declares the ownership; none henceforth has a right to meddle with what is God's. The devil has no right to lead that soul captive at his will; sin has no right to his service; he himself has no right to give himself away to serve any other purposes. Being bought with a price, he is not his own, he is God's. Having sealed him, God has a claim to his person, to his heart, to his affections, to his services, to his all. St. John tells us, "Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit." And again, "Hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us." The seal is the mark by which we have an assurance that we are His. Brethren, we are none of God's unless we have this seal in our hearts.

2. A seal is attached to a document to show that it is genuine, authenticated, and confirmed. A deed, or compact, or agreement is sealed to signify that it is approved by the parties signing it. Being thus signed and sealed, it is established and made sure. In a similar manner Christians are said to be sealed by the Holy Spirit. St. Paul, in writing to the Ephesians, says, "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were *sealed* with that Holy Spirit of promise." The Holy Spirit is given them to produce in their hearts those feelings, hopes, and desires which are an evidence that they are approved of God; that they are regarded as His adopted children; that their hope is genuine, and that their salvation and redemption is sure. There is nothing miraculous in this. It consists of the ordinary operation of the Spirit on the heart, producing repentance, and faith, and love, and hope, and joy, and conformity to the will of God, and the love of prayer, and praise, and the Christian graces generally. These things are the evidences that the Holy Spirit has renewed the heart to believe, and that the believer is "sealed for the day of

redemption." This Spiritual seal does not secure the confirmation of God's promises on His part, but He condescends to set His seal to His promises for the confirmation of His people, that they also may be assured of their authenticity, and "that by two immutable things (the promise and oath), in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation who have fled for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before us." Thus we are confirmed in our Christian graces, going from strength to strength, renewed in the spirit of our minds, strengthened in the inner man, and pressing "forward to the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

3. A seal is used for the purposes of security. Formerly it was employed to secure a place of confinement, to indicate the safety of the person or thing confined. When Daniel was cast into the den of lions by the wicked decree of the Persians, confirmed by King Darius, we are told that "a stone was brought, and laid upon the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet, and the signet of his lords, that the purpose might not be changed concerning Daniel." We have an equally wicked act of the Jews, when they placed our Saviour's body in the grave; "they went and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone and setting a watch." This act of sealing the stone made it a crime of high treason, which involved inevitable death, to uncloset that place of confinement.

By a more sure act God secures the safety of His people from all assaults that may be made upon them. The impious conduct of the Persians and the Jews does not afford a parallel further than the seal was used for security. He places His seal as a mark upon the persons of His people, so that no destructive weapon is allowed to touch them. In the vision of Ezekiel he heard the Lord say to the man clothed with linen, with the writer's inkhorn by his side, "Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark on the foreheads of the men that sigh, and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst

thereof." Those were the only men that were saved when all the rest were destroyed, both old and young. In the vision of St. John, he heard it said, "Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads." To whatever spiritual danger or calamity others may be exposed, those who bear the seal of God are perfectly safe. "There is now therefore no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." The Apostle, in the confidence of a holy enthusiasm, asks the comprehensive question, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" Then with renewed energy he says, "For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Finally, the image on a seal is transferred to the object impressed by it, as is the image of God transferred to the souls of those whom He seals. They are "renewed in His image." By the act of regeneration they receive the impression, perhaps not fully at once, it may be the work of years to receive a clear likeness of God's image; but gradually, through the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit, they grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, until ultimately, like the circulating coin of a country, they bear the exact impression of their Sovereign.

We observe—

II. God's pledge unto His people, "and hath given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts."

The word *earnest*, or the phrase *earnest of the Spirit*, as used here and in other places by the same Apostle, means properly a pledge given to ratify a contract; it is a part of the price or purchase-money, or a first payment which confirms the bargain, and which is considered as a guarantee that all the price will in due time be paid. It refers to those influences of the Spirit on the heart upon earth as a pledge

of the future glories which await the Christian in heaven. In regard to the "earnest," or part of the price which is paid in a contract, it may be remarked—

1. That it is of the same nature as the full price, being regarded as a part of it. The graces of the Christian here are of the same nature as they will be in heaven. The feeling of comfort, of love, of peace, of joy which is realized by the believer here, is the foretaste of the same feeling hereafter. The heart, actuated by the Spirit, is heaven in miniature. It is the bud of that rose which shall be hereafter fully blown. Those who shall enjoy heaven above must first know something of its enjoyments below. Whilst the body is of the earth earthy, the soul is of heaven heavenly; it breathes the atmosphere of heaven; its aspirations are heavenward; its contemplations are on the things of heaven, and all its affections are drawn to heaven. The reason why we do not realize the full fruition of the pleasures which are at God's right hand, is the connexion existing between the earthy and the heavenly, and the remains of corruption existing in the heart, together with the external influences of evil that surround us in the world. We are now like a man in prison, his body confined within a narrow cell, but his mind taking a flight to his home and to his friends, with whom he holds fellowship in spirit although absent in the body. Bad as his case may be, he enjoys some comfort and happiness in thinking of those who are dear to him, and that happiness partakes of the same nature as he hopes to enjoy when he will be actually among them. The consolations which we realize in attending the ordinances of God's sanctuary, the joy of which we partake in contemplating the love of the Saviour, the happiness which we feel in communion with kindred Christian spirits upon earth are precisely the same in nature as we shall realize in heaven. The joys of heaven differ only in degree, not in kind. On earth grace is the bud, in heaven it will be the full-blown rose. Here we sip from the stream, there we shall drink at the fountain-head; here we enjoy the rays of the sun through a medium, there

we shall wade in the ocean of Divine love; here we "see through a glass darkly, there we shall see even as we are seen." It only wants the removal of the medium to expand our contracted happiness into perfect enjoyment.

2. The earnest is regarded as a pledge that the full price will be paid. Hence its value and priceless worth. There is a vast difference between a shilling, regarded only as a piece of money, and a shilling that is an earnest of a greater sum. It is a cause of joy to a person in great want to possess even a single shilling: but how greatly is his joy increased when he is assured that the shilling secures to him the possession of thousands of pounds. It is joy to find grace in our souls as grace mortifying our corruption and strengthening our weakness, but far greater is the joy to look upon that grace as an earnest of glory. The earnest may be small; you may not enjoy much comfort, much happiness here, but never mind if it be of the right sort, for, however small, it secures to you ample payment hereafter. The sheaf that was waved before the Lord was only a single sheaf, but, if accepted, it secured to the Israelites the safe harvest of the whole crop. If you enjoy only one ray of Divine light in your heart, it will lead you to the full blaze of eternal glory; if you possess but one grain of God's grace, it will secure to you an inheritance which is undefiled and that fadeth not away; if you have experienced the renewing, vivifying, strengthening, comforting influences of the Holy Ghost here, you are assured thereby that never-ending happiness awaits you hereafter.

Then, Christian, be not cast down. Thank God for your privilege; appreciate the earnest; value the foretaste; feel assured by the pledge of the future inheritance. If you are brought under the renewing influences of the Spirit here; if you are made meek, and humble, and prayerful by His agency; if you are made to partake of the joys which result from pardoned sin; if you are filled with the hope of heaven, be patient and endure, for the day of your redemption draweth nigh.

The Second Sunday after Trinity.

MORNING SERVICE.—Second Lesson : Mark xi.

Verse 22.—“ *Have faith in God.*”

THIS is a command solemnly given by Christ Himself, indicating that faith is not a physical necessity, but a voluntary act of the mind ; by which I mean that it is not like hunger and thirst, that compels a man to eat and drink. We would not deny that faith is the gift of God, implanted by His Spirit in the heart of man, but implanted in such a way as to encourage and not to destroy man's volition. God has never annexed the conditions of everlasting life and everlasting death to the mere result of physical causes, or He would thereby nullify the moral character of man, treating him as a brute, or a stone, or a stream, and not as an intelligent being, subject to a moral law. Faith is everywhere commended in Scripture as a moral act, when the reward of obedience and the punishment of disobedience are taken into consideration. If we believe, we are commended ; if we disbelieve, we are censured. This would not be done if belief or disbelief were a physical necessity, or, in other words, if we had not the power to believe in obedience to God's command. The way of life and the way of death are placed before us,—we may choose the one or the other as the inclinations of our mind lead us. God, on His part, has furnished the inducements, confirmed by the most convincing evidences ; we, on our part, are to weigh the evidences as moral agents. And when we assent to the truth of the statements of God's Word, His Spirit aids us to rely upon them so as to make our belief saving faith. Faith, therefore, is the hinge on which the whole Evangelical system turns. “ Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou

shalt be saved." "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not shall not see life."

Our Saviour attached so great importance to faith that He insisted upon it as the leading evidence of true discipleship, and regarded it as the great groundwork of all other Christian graces. Thus He taught His followers that if they possessed faith nothing should be too hard for them. In reply to the surprise of the disciples at the withering of the fig-tree, which He had caused, He merely said—"Have faith in God." Believe in Him, and trust in His power, then all things can be accomplished. The great subject which is here brought before us is the power of faith. We shall therefore attend—first, to the nature of faith; secondly, to the objects of faith; and thirdly, to the benefits of faith.

I. The nature of faith. What is faith? Bishop Pearson defines it as being "an assent to that which is credible as credible." According to this definition faith acts only upon things which cannot be attested by the senses, or cannot be the result of natural causes. We do not believe in what we see, or hear, or smell, or taste, or feel; by these means things become certainties, and are not the subjects of faith. Faith is the instrument by which objects obtain existence in the mind which are not apparent to the senses of the body. "Now faith," says St. Paul, "is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen." That is, it aids its possessor to feel and act towards absent and unseen objects as if they were present and visible. Such was the faith of Abel in reference to the sacrifice of Christ, such was the faith of Enoch in reference to a future state, such was the faith of Noah in reference to the deluge, such was the faith of Abraham in reference to his posterity, and such is the faith of all in reference to things unseen and future.

Hence faith is founded upon the testimony of others; and in proportion to the conviction of the mind respecting the truth of a testimony will be the strength or weakness of faith.

When the truth of a declaration forces itself upon your conviction without any possibility of mistake, you then place implicit reliance upon it, and no counter testimony can cause you to waver.

Faith is founded on two kinds of testimonies,—the testimony of man, and the testimony of God.

1. There is faith founded on human testimony, by which I understand the reliance which one man reposes upon the declaration of another. This is the great bond of union which unites society together; losing this the whole would be broken up into fractional parts. There would be no cohesion, nothing to cement man to man, country to country. The consequence would be that commerce would be at an end, trade would stand still, the world would be to everyone a solitary wilderness, and no one would feel safe for his life. The past would be to us a blank; the present, except in our immediate locality, would be fabulous; the future would be a labyrinth of uncertainty. We believe that such men as Alexander, and Cæsar, and William the Conqueror, and Martin Luther, and other men of equal renown existed and effected remarkable things in their day because we read of them in history, and, believing that history, we derive instruction from their examples. We believe that there are such countries as India, and Australia, and Africa, and are willing to invest our capital in trading with those countries, because those whom we know to be true men have told us of their existence and resources, and the benefit to be realised by trading with them. We feel a degree of assurance respecting future results, because men of experience tell us that such effects are connected with such causes. We trust also to the promises made to us by our neighbours; hence the energy we feel, and the encouragements we receive, in passing through life. This is faith founded on human testimony, and will serve in a measure to illustrate—

2. Faith founded on Divine testimony. “If we receive the witness of man, the witness of God is greater.” It is so much more to be believed as God is infallible and man at the

best is fallible, as God is true and every man may be a liar. Now, to carry out the principle of Divine faith, we must believe the Scriptures to be "indeed the word of God, and not the word of man." "The holy men of God spake and wrote them as they were inspired by the Holy Ghost." Men were the medium through which the testimony of God was transferred to the world. They handled the pen, but God supplied the substance of the matter and guided the hand. Unless we regard the Scriptures, the *whole* of the Scriptures, in this light, it would be impossible for us to distinguish between human and divine testimony, and we should be left in a painful state of uncertainty. Faith, in this respect, may be again divided into two branches: one branch would be an act of the understanding, the other would be an act of the heart. Faith, as an act of the understanding, is to give full credence to all the statements of Scripture as true, *incontrovertibly* true, in all their substance and ramifications. We thus believe that whatever is stated to have taken place has actually occurred, however beyond our comprehension may be the nature of the action. We thus believe the history of the Scripture to be true history; we thus believe the prophecies of Scripture to be true prophecies; we thus believe the miracles of Scripture to be true miracles; we thus believe the doctrines of the Scripture to be true doctrines. The whole is reduced to a simple acquiescence in all that is brought before us. But faith, as an act of the heart, goes further than this. It not only believes the statements to be true, but that they are true in respect to us,—that we have an interest in them, and, adopting them as our own, we place full reliance upon them as the only means of our reconciliation with God, of our peace of mind and happiness in this life, and of our eternal salvation in the life to come.

Let us observe—

II. The objects of faith. According to what we have already stated those objects are numerous and various, including everything, both good and bad, that may be received on

the testimony of others. All, however, in Divine faith, may be reduced to one chief supreme object, whom we have mentioned in the text. "Have faith in *God*." God in Christ is the great object of the Christian's faith. On Him he grounds his belief; on Him he stays his existence.

This includes—

1. To have faith in the existence of God. "He that cometh to God must believe that he is." We cannot exercise faith in the testimony of any person unless we believe in the past or the present existence of that person. The existence of God is the groundwork of spiritual faith. If we believe that there is no God, our religion is a myth; our very existence is an accident. We die like brutes after living like men, having no prospect but annihilation, no future home but the grave. May we be delivered from such a poor, miserable, beggarly, degrading notion! Not only are we to believe that God is, but that He is what He is represented to be—a God of wisdom, of power, of truth, of justice, of holiness, of mercy, of forgiveness, of love. All His glorious attributes are to form branches of our creed, the omission of one would cause a vacuum, and our faith would be incomplete.

2. Have faith in the providence of God. He might have existed, and might have possessed the attributes mentioned without exercising any general or particular interposition for the benefit of man upon earth. To believe thus would be an ungenial faith. To feel assured that such a Being existed, but had no regard whatever for our circumstances, would be a most down-sinking feeling to the mind. But knowing that He observes us, watches over us, cares for us, guides us, and is present with us in the absence of all others, cheers the mind amidst all the reverses, the trials, the disappointments, and the discouragements of life. You may have a large family with gloomy prospects for the means of support; pinching poverty may stare you in the face; the burden seems heavier than you can bear—"have faith in God." He never sends a man into the world without providing for him, and He will direct your affairs beyond your expectation. You

may have been bereaved of the best member of your family ; the mother may have been taken away from a large family of young children ; the father, who was the medium of their bread, may have been suddenly snatched away by the stroke of an accident ; or the son, on whom the stay of the widowed mother rested, has fallen a victim to the last enemy—"have faith in God ;" He will supply the loss. You may have suffered reverses and lost your all by a blow of misfortune on sea or land, and your mind may have sunk almost to despair under the providence—"have faith in God ;" He will, as in the case of Job, cause even this to work for your good. You may have endured deep bodily affliction, racked with pain, and reduced to the brink of the grave by disease, like the man at the pool of Bethesda, or the woman with the issue of blood, year after year, may have witnessed your infirmity—"have faith in God ;" He will do what is best for you. You may have been the victim of doubts and fears, Satan accusing you of past delinquencies, and your sins appearing too great to be forgiven—"have faith in God ;" He is able to save to the uttermost all that come through Christ to Him. Who would be without such confidence as this ?

3. Have faith in the promises of God. Those promises are "great and precious." They contain both temporal and spiritual blessings, and they are applied both to the Christian individually and to the Church collectively. St. Paul, for our encouragement, assures us that "all the promises of God in him are" (that is, Christ), "yea, and in him Amen." To enumerate even the recorded promises of Scriptures would be the work of days, and who can tell the amount of unexpressed blessings each promise contains. They are applicable to every condition, can be realized in every circumstance, are intended for every age. "As apples of gold in pictures of silver" do they appear in the Bible ; their value cannot be estimated. They sweeten every bitter, they ease every pain, they strengthen every infirmity, they cast a ray of sunshine into the darkest night. Have faith in them, they are given by a God who cannot lie, and they are confirmed by His oath.

III. Let us briefly consider the benefits of faith. Those benefits may be summed up in a few words, although the import of them can never be estimated by any finite being. Faith in God may be regarded—

1. As producing a genial influence on the mind of the believer himself. Every believed testimony produces an emotion in the mind in proportion to its nature, its importance, and its relationship to the individual. If it be good, it will cause joy; if it be bad, it will cause grief; if it be extremely good or bad, it will produce proportionate joy or grief. For instance, if it be related to a person in extreme poverty that a friend has left him a legacy of 100*l.* in his last will and testament, the news, if credited, will cause joy; if it be declared that the sum is 1,000*l.*, the joy will then be ten times as great. If a person were wrecked at sea, standing on the fragments of his broken ship, having no prospect but death before him, how great would be his joy should a vessel bear up at the time, and rescue him from his danger. His joy would be greater still if he had been standing on that wreck for days without food or water, to be saved in the extremity of despair. Consistently with this, when the jailor of Philippi, on the brink of despair, heard the declaration of Paul and Silas that salvation was to be obtained through Christ, “rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.” Likewise, the Ethiopian eunuch, believing “that Jesus Christ is the Son of God,” on the testimony of Philip, “went on his way rejoicing.” Faith in God gives confidence, confidence gives energy, energy gives perseverance, and thus the mind is cheered amid the turmoils of life.

Faith assures the believer of his acceptance with God. “Without faith it is impossible to please God.” This is the condition which He has attached to our obtaining His favour. Abraham “believed in God, and it was counted to him for righteousness.” The sinner is justified only on the ground of his believing. God is jealous for His veracity; no greater insult can be offered to Him than disbelieving His word. Whatever you may do, whatever acts of charity you may

perform, whatever self-denial you may exercise, whatever sacrifices you may make, unless done by faith, none will be acceptable; and, like the self-righteous Pharisee, you will go from the presence of God unjustified and unblessed.

8. Faith in God encourages the believer to persevere in spite of the greatest difficulties. Whether we regard our temporal affairs, or our spiritual duties, thus we obtain animation and strength to brave opposition. We can battle the difficulties of life and the reverses of fortune if we have faith in God. The minister of the Gospel, amid his trying labours and the discouraging results of his ministry, is cheered onward by trusting in God. The Christian Missionary in combating the atrocities of heathenism and the baneful influence of ignorance, is strengthened to perform his arduous task by having faith in God. The ordinary Christian, whatever be his temptations, his oppositions, and dangers, can go on his way rejoicing, if he has faith in God. Thus the rugged road of life is travelled by every believer, being assured of aid and comfort, until he reaches the portals of Heaven.

Finally. Faith in God incites obedience to His will. "If ye love me, keep my commandments," was the injunction of Christ. We cannot love without faith, love is the offspring of faith, "Believing, we rejoice," believing also we love, and loving we obey. If we believe that God is what the Bible represents Him to be, especially if we believe that "in Christ, He reconciles the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them," then we love Him with an unfeigned heart, and obey Him with an unreserved mind.

In conclusion, let us ask ourselves whether we possess faith; then, if we think we have it, of what nature is it? If it be merely a giving consent to all the articles of the three creeds, it is inefficient. It must enter more fully into God's scheme of redemption through Christ, so that the soul may rest the whole weight of its hopes for salvation upon God; coming to Him through Christ—pleading the Atonement of Christ—and relying upon the constant intercession of Christ. This is faith, may we possess it.

The Second Sunday after Trinity.

EVENING SERVICE.—First Lesson : Judges v.

Verse 23.—“ *Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty.*”

THIS chapter contains the song of Deborah after the famous victory obtained by Israel, with the help of God, over the hosts of Jabin, the king of Canaan. This song is one of the finest pieces of composition found in any history. Whether its thrilling poetic strains, its devoutly sublime sentiments, or its forcibly convincing eloquence be regarded, it cannot fail to impress the mind with admiration and surprise. Deborah being a prophetess, devoted herself especially to the welfare of the people. Under the palm tree between Ramah and Bethel, she watched their oppressions by the enemy, she prayed for their deliverance, and by her arguments and example she inspired them with courage to shake off the yoke under which they groaned. When necessity demanded she summoned them to arms, and the desired result being obtained, she summoned them to praises. The song commences with a rehearsal of God's Majesty and goodness vindicated by His works of old, and by His constant readiness to defend His people. Then she recounts those who fought for Israel, those who fought against them, and those who stood neutral. In the ranks of those who fought in favour of Israel, were not only some portions of a few tribes, especially Zebulun and Naphtali, but the stars in their courses fought against Sisera, and the river Kishon swept them away. God will not be in lack of instruments, when He has a great work to perform; if men will not voluntarily

come forward, nature will not deny its aid ; even heaven and earth shall pass away before one iota of His word shall fail. Those who fought against Israel were the hosts of Jabin King of Canaan under the command of Sisera, with whom Amalek and other nations were confederate. But amid the din of war and the violence of strife, there were some who stood neutral observers, a great number of whom were those who should have been foremost in the day of battle. Secure within their own havens and houses they were regardless of the safety of others, and indifferent about the glory of God. Reuben stood aloof, which was the cause of disappointment and grief. Gilead abode beyond Jordan out of the way of danger. Dan remained in ships, rejoicing in the protection of the sea. Asher was content to be engaged in repairing the breaches which the sea had probably made in the shore ; but above all, Meroz is condemned and cursed for not giving a helping hand. "Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof ; because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty." What place this was is not certain, but it is supposed to be a city of considerable importance at the time, situated near the seat of action, but in consequence of this curse, like the withering of the barren fig tree, it was afterwards so reduced that its name does not occur again in history.

There are three important lessons to be learnt from this circumstance in general, and from the case of Meroz in particular. First, that the enemies of God and His people are mighty ; secondly, that God requires our help to subdue them ; and thirdly, that those who will withhold their aid shall be condemned and cursed.

I. The enemies of God and His people are mighty.

The forces which were opposed to Deborah and Barak, with their handful of ten thousand men, presented a formidable array ; for, in addition to the nine hundred chariots of iron, we read of a "multitude," and of the Amalekites, and

of the Kings of Canaan that fought by the waters of Megiddo; they would have crushed that devoted band did not God adopt their cause, and fight in favour of His people. More formidable still are the forces arrayed against God's spiritual Israel. You may as well attempt to count the stars which are scattered over the midnight sky, or the blades of grass which grow on the surface of the globe, as to count those spiritual enemies; and each one of them is a Goliath of Gath in opposition to the stripling David, when they stand alone in the contest. God, however, makes common cause with His people. *Their* enemies are *His* enemies, and *His* enemies are *their* enemies. Those who fight against the one must of necessity fight against the other. Were we asked to describe those enemies, we might answer that they consist in all things which are opposed to truth, to holiness, and to goodness. They may be classified into the inward natural propensities of the mind, and the outward evil practices of life.

1. The inward natural propensities of the mind are enemies to God and His people, because they tend to dishonour the character and glory of the one, and to destroy the well-being and happiness of the other. Those propensities were generated by the sin of Adam, and are born with every man as he comes into the world. David felt this when he said, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." Being thus instilled into our nature, they grow with our growth, and strengthen with our strength. "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." No; it cannot be, for its desires tend to evil, its passions lead it from God, and arm all its powers against His will. We need only consult our own experience to prove to ourselves the malignant tendency of our minds. Have you not felt, brethren, that "when you would do good, that evil is present with" you? How often have you desired to shake off the disposition to "the sin which doth so easily beset" you, but you were compelled to cry out with St. Paul, "Oh, wretched

man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" This is the law in the members warring against the law of the mind, of which he speaks, bringing us into captivity to the law of sin, which is in our members. In spite of our reason, and all the better feelings of our nature, those corrupt propensities will struggle for the ascendancy. They are mighty, too mighty for us to subdue in our own strength, and by our own wisdom. Self is the most formidable enemy with which one has to contend. You cannot conquer yourself, while you may overcome every outward foe. Alexander the Great was once asked what was the greatest achievement that man could win, and he replied, "To conquer himself." Though he had conquered the chief parts of the known world, he miserably failed in this achievement, but fell a victim to his own propensities in the meridian of life.

2. Then there are the outward evil practices of life with which we have to contend. The force of habit in every man is strong. It is this that gives strength to the outward difficulties in the way of our own spiritual improvement, and of the success of God's cause in the world. Think of the religious prejudices of the heathen world enforced by the customs of ages, standing as a mighty rampart against the progress of Divine truth, and the spread of the Gospel in foreign lands; add to this the ignorance of barbarism, the distinction of castes, and the cruelty of ambition, then you will perceive the mighty forces arrayed against God's cause abroad. Persecutions, such as in former ages consigned apostles, martyrs, and confessors to imprisonment and death, are still rife in some parts of the world. The more scientific prince, priest, and statesman, as well as the ignorant rabble, have not yet, in many instances, thrown aside the institutions of torture and death from the followers of the meek and lowly Jesus; and even where open persecutions are restrained by more genial laws, as in our blessed country, still the words of our Saviour are fully verified in respect to the unregenerate world, "Ye shall be hated by all men for my name's sake." Then look at the moral evils which are practised even among

nominal Christians. We may pass over the more flagrant criminal deeds whose name is *legion*, and regard merely those at which society winks, but are equally criminal in the sight of God, and strike at the very vitals of true religion. What would you say of the practice of cheating and knavery which is carried on almost in every branch of our country's trade? What would you say of the adultery, of the gaming, of the profane language, of the desecration of the Lord's-day, of the want of truthfulness, of the waste of time and talent in novel reading, and other frivolities which are so common in our day? Above all, what would you think of the monster evil, *intemperance*, at the shrine of which holocausts of victims have been, and are still annually sacrificed: which has destroyed its millions, and tens of millions, and which is one of the most formidable citadels in the possession of the great arch-enemy the devil, for the dishonour of God, and the ruin of man? Such evils as these might be multiplied a thousandfold, all of which serve as fuel to feed the flame of the heart's inward corruptions. Then, when you consider them all collected together, in one combined force, attacking the citadel of truth and holiness, you may come to the just conclusion that the enemies of God and His people are mighty.

We observe—

II. That God requires our help to subdue the enemies. He does not ask us to stand alone in the ranks. He places Himself in the van and fights for us and with us, but He will not do all and we do nothing. If we expect to share the victory we must first share the contest. His Spirit has engaged to become our General to guide and to strengthen us; when we flag He inspires, when we fail He interposes, but all is done with our co-operation. St. Paul calls us "fellow-workers" with God. What an honour He confers upon us, to work with us, and call upon us to work with Him! Barak, accompanied by Deborah, was to go down from Mount Tabor, and ten thousand men after him. They went to exercise all their ingenuity and strength in the contest: where

they were inefficient, God interposed and ordered the stars to fight in their courses against Sisera, and the river Kishon was commanded to sweep the enemy away.

The reasons why God requires our help are :—

1. Because physical evils are to be removed by physical agency. There have been occasions when God in His providence graciously interposed miraculously to remove *natural* as well as *moral* evils. As in the case of the Israelites, He showered manna from heaven to supply the want of bread; in the case of a leper a disease was cured for which human skill never discovered a specific; in the case of Christ and His apostles miracles were performed to establish the validity of their mission. But the age of miracles has now ceased, and as far as we know things are only done by ordinary approved means. When the farmer wishes to rid his field of noxious weeds, he must employ the plough and the harrow, and the spade and weedhook; when the gardener wishes to rid his plants of destructive insects, he must employ appropriate means for the purpose; when a person contracts a serious disease, instead of expecting to be cured by a miracle, he has recourse to a skilful physician, who applies suitable remedies to his case; when a country is attacked by a foreign foe, the inhabitants resort to proper means of defence to resist the enemy, and drive him from the coast. The same principles are observed in all the arrangements of nature and society, without which all would be involved in rack and ruin. To secure success the agency must indeed be accompanied with a Divine blessing, without that nothing is strong, nothing is perfect, but the blessing is vouchsafed in conjunction with the means.

2. Evils contracted by man are to be counteracted by the agency of man. O brethren, have we not an instance of this unparalleled in the history of any world, when the Son of God became the Son of man, that He might be in a capacity to counteract the awful evil which was brought into the world by man? "When the fulness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son made of a woman, made under the

law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." St. Paul beautifully argues this subject in his Epistle to the Romans. "Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them who had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come," &c., Romans v. 14—19. It was absolute that Christ should become man to remove the evil brought by man upon man. The gospel that was founded by man, must also be propagated by man, or it would not answer the end for which it was intended. God could have ordered it otherwise if it had been consistent with His infinite wisdom; but He knew that the means would not be adapted to the case. He might have placed the gospel in the fork of a lightning's flash, and telegraphed it from east to west, from north to south in a few seconds, but it would merely awe not convert the human mind; or He might have entrusted it to the charge of an angel, who would be as faithful as ever in the discharge of his mission, but his nature is too sublime, he could not sympathize with the object of his agency. It is the humble, frail man missionary that must go forth that he may patiently and perseveringly persuade his fellow man to turn from the evil of his ways. If the evils which we have already mentioned are to be counteracted and removed, it must be done by human means, God by His Spirit working with them. The means are not to be *physical* or *civil*, but *moral*. We are to *persuade* men. Ignorance is to be removed by the teacher—the Sunday school—the day school—the pulpit teachers. All evil practices must be rooted out by the dissemination of truth, of righteousness, of holiness; the enemy must be conquered by the sword of the Spirit wielded by man. Thus we are called to the help of the Lord against the mighty.

We may observe—

III. That those who withhold their help are condemned and cursed. "Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord,

curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof, because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty."

It would have been better had we not been born than to be under the ban of God's curse. It involves the misery of temporary destitution here, and of endless destitution hereafter. If the displeasure of a king be "as the roaring of a lion," what must be the displeasure of a God, in whose hands is the breath of all kings and subjects?

We learn from the circumstances before us:—

1. That God will admit of no neutrality in His cause. The inhabitants of Meroz did not join the enemy. There is no charge whatever brought against them that they were ill-disposed towards Israel or the God of Israel, there is no complaint whatever of their having placed any impediment in the way of God's people; they merely stood aloof in the day of battle, and appeared indifferent to the result of the contest. The enemy might have won the victory for anything they cared; or if the victory (as it did) turned in favour of Israel, no thanks were due to them for any interest which they felt in the matter; for that they were cursed. Are there not too many still who would not for the world join the enemies of God to persecute His cause and His people, yet they stand aloof, like Gallio, "caring for none of these things." Listen to what Christ says on the subject: "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." We must be either *for* or *against* in this case. There is no middle course. It is not sufficient that you are not openly profane and wicked—it is not sufficient that you give no countenance to evil; but you must be decided and active with that which is good. Your sins of omission shall be punished as well as those of commission. "Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof, because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty."

2. The punishment will be in proportion to the opportunities afforded us of doing good. Reuben is censured for his divisions, and for abiding among his sheepfolds, Gilcad for biding beyond Jordan, Dan for remaining in his ships, and Asher for continuing on the sea shore in his breaches; but Meroz only comes under the bitter curse. Why was this? The affair belonged so much to Reuben; Gilcad, Dan, and Asher as it did to the inhabitants of Meroz. They were all interested in the result, for if the Canaanites had prevailed, they would have subdued the whole country under their sway; but what seems to be the reason is, they were farther from the scene of action, and perhaps could not be present in time without considerable inconvenience and loss, whilst the inhabitants of Meroz were on the spot, and probably eye-witnesses of the proceedings. The ancient Egyptians, and Persians, and Greeks, and Romans were punished for their sins, but the double curse fell upon the Jews for persecuting the prophets, and rejecting the Saviour. The inhabitants of heathendom are punished in proportion to their light and knowledge; but the curse will fall heavily upon the inhabitants of a Christian land, who persist in sin and slight salvation. Then again those in an enlightened country shall be punished according to the privileges placed at their disposal. Some turn in higher spheres, and have greater opportunities for doing good, whilst others in humble stations are more limited in their means of action; the heaviest curse falls upon the most highly privileged. This question is settled by Christ Himself. "And that servant which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom men have committed much, of him will they ask the more."

In the face of this declaration, brethren, our responsibilities are awfully great. Do you, do *I* feel the import of them? A moment's reflection would convince us that we stand in

imminent danger of being punished, not only for the sins which we have committed, but also for the duties which we have neglected. Let us go to the "fountain filled with blood," that the guilt of our commissions and omissions may be washed away.

The Third Sunday after Trinity.

MORNING SERVICE.—First Lesson : 1 Samuel ii.

Verse 30.—“ *Wherefore the Lord God of Israel saith, I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me for ever : but now the Lord saith, Be it far from me ; for them that honour me will I honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.*”

It is a most dangerous thing to commence the downward course of sin. Once it is commenced, it is uncertain when and where it may end. A stone rolling down a hill receives renewed impetus by every turn of its progress, and the resistance must be powerful which can stay it before it arrives at the bottom, there imbedding itself, perhaps irrecoverably, in the earth. Such is the course of sin, such was the course of the sons of Eli ; they began by disregarding the counsels of God, which led them on to disregard the counsels of a pious parent ; by degrees they became guilty of acts of the grossest immorality, despising the regulations of religion, kicking at the sacrifice and offering of God, and being hardened in the commission of crime they incurred the Divine displeasure, and rendered themselves obnoxious to inevitable retribution. Eli himself was a good man, but of an irresolute disposition, too indulgent to his children, conniving at their sins until the habit of evil grew to a fearful extent, therefore God is said to be angry with him. Every parent should learn a lesson from this, knowing that “he who spareth the rod spoileth the child.” The uncorrected child will soon become hardened in sin, break over every restraint, despise the counsel that comes too late, and fall a victim to his parent’s indulgence. Eli, when he “was very old,” expostulated with his sons respecting their wickedness, but it

was too late, the proper season was neglected, the evil work had been done, and to his mortification and sorrow he found that "notwithstanding they hearkened not to the voice of their father."

In the text, and the preceding verses, God reproves Eli by an appointed messenger whom he sent unto him. And there came a man of God unto Eli, and said unto him, "Thus saith the Lord, Did I plainly appear unto the house of thy father, when they were in Egypt, in Pharaoh's house?" &c., verse 27—30.

We are here furnished with three important practical subjects. First, that man by obedience honours, and by disobedience dishonours God. Secondly, that acts of honour shall be rewarded, and acts of dishonour shall be punished. Thirdly, that God's most positive promises are conditional.

I. Man by obedience honours, and by disobedience dishonours God. Religion is reverence—such reverence that leads not only to respect an object, but also to love, adore, and obey that object. These three things are demanded of us in our reverence of God.

1. We are required to love Him with an unfeigned love; not with a love of passion such as we feel towards a fellow-being, which often becomes the toy of circumstances, waxing or waning in proportion to the inducements towards the one or the other; but it is to be a love of principle, implanted and rooted in the heart, which no circumstance can change, which no disappointment can uproot, which no inducement can obliterate. The nearest parallel that can be found in human love is that of the parent towards the child; here love is a principle, not a passion. Unless the parent be a monster, he will love his child amid all the reverses and changes of life. He is a part of his own nature. Let him be removed from him to the antipodes of the earth, let him be undutiful and delinquent, he will love him still. Even this however does not fully express the nature of our love to God; that love is to be supreme, such as none else can share. It is to love Him

with all the heart, with all the soul, and with all the strength, which is the first and great commandment.

2. Possessing this love to God, there is an adoration of Him. The mind feels the greatness of His power and wisdom, as well as that of His goodness and love, so that there is created in it a holy awe of His Divine character. All its thoughts are absorbed in the contemplation of His majesty; and seeing there such height of glory combined with such condescending love, it falls prostrate before Him under the weight of its own littleness.

3. When this is the case, a prompt obedience is actuated to all His commands. No duty which He imposes seems too hard to be attempted, the yoke is easy, and the burden is light, for there is a heart to obey. Prayer and perseverance are called into action; the life is devoted to the service, and every motion is subservient to the will of God. This characterized the obedience of Abraham, and all the patriarchs and prophets, this characterized the obedience of the apostles and martyrs, this especially characterized the obedience of Christ who came to do the will of Him that sent Him, becoming "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Such love, adoration, and obedience honour God, with such he is well pleased.

On the other hand, disobedience dishonours Him. Disobedience is a mark of the want of respect to the authority and the will of the Almighty. This is at the root of every sin, the forerunner of every crime. The sons of Eli despised the instituted services of God, consequently they desecrated the sacrifices, they robbed the sanctuary, they pampered their appetites, they committed the most abominable lewdness. There is a kindred alliance between religion and morality, like righteousness and peace they kiss each other. A man without religion is a most dangerous character. Whatever his situation in life may be, he can no more be trusted than Saul, the King of Israel, who was rejected first, because of his contempt for the stated ordinances of religion, and secondly, because of his disobedience to the command of God.

You may have observed that the sacred historians give for the leading feature of every prince among the kings of Israel and Judah, "He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord;" or, "He did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord." The thing that was right consisted of two things; first, there must have been a strict attention to all the prescribed rites of Divine worship; and secondly, there must have been a most minute regard to those oraculous communications which the Almighty deigned to give His favourite people. Saul fell under the bane of the neglect, "Now thy kingdom shall not continue: the Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the Lord hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the Lord commanded thee." He dishonoured God by disobedience arising from contempt of His authority. Thus all who disobey Him are registered in the same catalogue; like the sons of Eli, they make the Lord's people to transgress, causing men to abhor the offering of the Lord. If the leaders of the people especially have no piety, and act as if there were no God, they cause others to despise God's service and become infidels.

We observe—

II. That acts of honour to God shall be rewarded, and acts of dishonour shall be punished. "For them that honour me will I honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed."

1. We have the reward. "Them that honour me will I honour." There is no lack of testimony to verify this statement. Has it not been proved to demonstration in every age of the world's history? God honours His honourers in *this* world by acts of special providence over them. We have the instances of Noah, and of Abraham, and of Jacob, and of Joseph, and of Moses, and of Joshua, and of Gideon, and of Samuel, and of David, and of the pious Kings of Judah, and of Elijah, and of Daniel, and of the Hebrew children, and of Mordecai, and of the apostles, recorded in the Sacred Scriptures to corroborate the fact. Although those inter-

positions of special Providence are not so apparent now as they were formerly, still, we have the assurance of God's promises that He has not withdrawn His providential care over His people that honour Him. David had been young, and had become old, but during the experience of his eventful life he could say, "Yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread." The promise has never yet failed, "Thy bread shall be given thee, and thy water is sure." Christ confirms the faith of His followers in the promises of God, when He says, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." And St. Peter, watching the care of Divine Providence, could confidently ask the scattered tribes, "And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" Being satisfied with the providential honours realized by the friends of God, there are other and still more select honours conferred upon them, a part of which they enjoy in this life, but the full portion is reserved for them in the life to come. Here, they are honoured with God's Spirit, adopting them into His family, renovating their minds, strengthening their hearts, comforting their souls, giving them a hope full of immortality, inspiring them with daily confidence, and implanting in them an earnest of what they shall hereafter possess. They are honoured with the cheering fellowship of the blessed Three. They shall obtain the victory over death; and they shall enjoy an everlasting inheritance in the world to come. Grace here, and glory hereafter. "Them that honour me I will honour."

2. There is a threatening of punishment in the text as well as a promise of reward. "And they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed." Reverse the medal and all the dishonour and destitution of God's enemies will be seen. If Samuel is to be honoured, the sons of Eli shall be discarded, and visited with calamities "at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle." The same contrast is drawn throughout the whole of God's dealings

with the world. Whilst Noah is saved, the impenitent antedelvians must perish; whilst Lot escapes, the wicked Sodomites are destroyed; whilst the Israelites are delivered, the unrelenting Egyptian must die; whilst Elijah is taken into heaven without dying, the impious Ahab and Jezebel shall meet with a degrading death; whilst Mordecai is exalted, the designing Haman shall be hanged; whilst Lazarus is conveyed by angels into Abraham's bosom, the once sumptuous liver shall lift up his eyes in hell, being in torments; whilst the righteous hath hope in his death, the wicked shall be driven away in his wickedness. The great finale of all is graphically described by our Saviour in the twenty-fifth chapter of St. Matthew, when both parties shall stand face to face before the great white throne, the one on the right hand and the other on the left of the Judge: "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." "Then shall he say also unto them on his left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

III. The third thing proposed is that the most absolute promises of God are conditional. It was so under the law; it is so under the gospel. Truly they were at first given freely without any outward inducement to actuate the mind of an infinitely gracious Being; but in their practical application the condition of faith and obedience is attached to every promise. "Wherefore the Lord God of Israel saith, I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me for ever. But now the Lord saith, Be it far from me; for them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed." The promise to which the text refers was made unto Aaron and unto his sons, and is recorded in Exodus xxix. 9. "And thou shalt gird them with girdles, Aaron and his sons, and put the bonnets on them, *and the priest's offices shall be theirs*

for a perpetual statute; and thou shalt consecrate Aaron and his sons." The same is repeated in respect to Aaron's sons in Exodus xl. 15. "And thou shalt anoint them, as thou didst anoint their father, that they may minister unto me in the priest's office; for their anointing shall surely be an *everlasting priesthood throughout their generations*." That the priesthood should be given to the family of Aaron, and not to the family of Moses, was an act of pure Divine sovereignty, perfectly unconditional, and irrespective of the character of the individuals, but in the subsequent working of the priesthood we find that it was transferred from one member to another of that family, according to the conduct of the respective persons. Aaron had four sons who were consecrated to the office, Nadab, and Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. In the passages which we have quoted, the promise was given generally to the descendants of Aaron; but further on in the history of the Israelites, we find that the promise of the priesthood was confined to the line of Phineas, the son of Eleazar, for that pious act of self-devotion recorded in Numbers xxv. Eli, however, was of the line of Ithamar. When the priesthood was transferred from the family of Phineas is not known; it is doubtless under some peculiar circumstances not perpetuated in sacred history. But here it is said that Eli and his sons having violated the conditions of the promise, God threatens to remove it from that house. This was done partly in the tragical end of Eli and his sons, and it was done completely in the days of Solomon as stated in 1 Kings ii. 26, 27. "And unto Abiathar the priest said the king, Get thee to Anathoth, unto thine own fields; for thou art worthy of death: but I will not at this time put thee to death, because thou barest the ark of the Lord God before David my father, and because thou hast been afflicted in all wherein my father was afflicted. So Solomon thrust out Abiathar from being priest unto the Lord; that he might fulfil the word of the Lord, which he spake concerning the house of Eli in Shiloh." But now the Lord saith, "Be it far from me." Consistently with this is the application of

all God's promises. If we believe in Him and obey Him, the benefit shall be ours ; but if we despise His commands and neglect our duty, it will be the same as if the promise never existed. "Them that honour me I will honour, but they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed." Solomon felt the conditional nature of God's promises when he prayed, "Therefore now, Lord God of Israel, keep with thy servant David my father that thou promisedest him, saying, There shall not fail thee a man in my sight to sit on the throne of Israel ; so that thy children take heed to their way, that they walk before me as thou hast walked before me." In respect to Israel it is said, "O that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways, I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries."

The declarations of the New Testament establish the same truth. Those who shall find rest to their souls, are those who take Christ's yoke upon them, and learn of Him. Those who "shall not perish, but have everlasting life," are those who "believe in Him." Forgiveness of sins is promised to those who repent. To them that come out from among the unclean, God has engaged to be a Father, and those who are "faithful unto death," shall have the "crown of life." If we honour Him, He will honour us ; if we walk in His ways, He will never forsake us.

Then, brethren, if you hope to realize the promises of God, keep His conditions. Never forget that salvation is an act of duty, as well as a benefit of grace. God forbid that any of us should, like the sons of Eli, despise the ordinance of God, or like them, we shall be rejected.

The Third Sunday after Trinity.

EVENING SERVICE.—Second Lesson : Gal. ii.

Verse 16.—“ *Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.*”

CLASS legislation is a thing of which God does not approve. He may have legislated for peculiar classes under peculiar circumstances, such as for kings, priests, magistrates, and so on, in their official capacities, and He legislated especially for the Jews when they were peculiarly distinguished from other nations; but when He institutes a law intended for the regulation of the conduct of mankind as His creatures, “He accepts no man’s person.” What is applicable to one nation or class, is applicable to another. The duty of obeying God, and observing each other’s rights, is universally incumbent upon all. More especially when we regard God’s plan of saving man from sin and its awful consequences, we find that all are equally treated. The rich and the poor must stand on the same platform, the Jew and the Gentile must meet on the same level. This is the important subject which the apostle impresses on the minds of the Galatians in this chapter. The false teachers had taught them that it was necessary for the Jews to adhere to the rites of the law of Moses, to their believing in Christ; the Gentiles might be excused those rites on account of their peculiar position, but they were absolute in the case of the Jews, as otherwise they could not be admitted into the favour of God. St. Paul here combats this notion, and shows that the way of salvation is the same to all. “Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith, *even we have believed in*

Jesus Christ." *Even we* the Jews, to whom were committed the oracles of God,—*even we* who have been distinguished above all the nations of the earth,—*even we*, "whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh, Christ came,"—" *even we* have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law, for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."

We have here three things brought before us ; First—The fact of a sinner's justification ; Secondly—The inefficiency of legal works to effect that justification ; and Thirdly—The means Divinely appointed for its accomplishment.

I. The fact of a sinner's justification before God.

To understand what is fully meant by being justified, let us illustrate it by the case of a trembling prisoner standing at the bar in the court of justice. There we have the criminal charged with a serious offence ; we have the witnesses giving their evidence on the offence ; we have the counsel taking the evidences for and against the prisoner ; we have the jury deliberating on the case ; and we have the judge sitting upon the bench to explain the bearing of the law upon that particular offence, and to pronounce the sentence upon the prisoner according to the verdict of the jury. When the case has been fully examined, it is left to the decision of the jury, and they retire for consultation. During their absence the criminal's heart is wrought up to the highest pitch of anxious excitement, he feels that his doom is in the balance, it may be that of life or death. Oh ! what care, what alternating between hope and fear ! At length the jury return, and when the foreman standing forward with his eyes fixed upon the judge, replies to the question, "What is your verdict—is the prisoner guilty or not guilty ?" "Not guilty !" a thrill of joy vibrates through the heart of the accused, when the judge announces the acquittal, and adds, "the law has no further demand upon you, it pronounces you innocent, you are at liberty to depart." The accused in this case is declared just in the view of the law ; and by an easy and natural figure is said to be *justified*.

Now, this act of the judge does not make the accused innocent, it merely declares him innocent in the sight of the law, and consequently justice has no claim to punish him. It is in this sense St. Paul employs the word *justifies*, both here, and in his Epistle to the Romans. But when it is used in connection with the fact of God's declaring the sinner to be innocent, it must be understood to comprehend something more extensive and noble than it does in the declaration of a judicial court. In this forensic sense of the term, it is obvious that no human being can be justified by the law, or before the throne of God. For as all mankind have disobeyed this law, it is clear that He whose judgment is invariably according to truth must declare them guilty. Still the Scriptures abundantly teach us that *what* the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, "God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh," and making Him a sin-offering for man, has, by thus condemning sin in the flesh, accomplished for multitudes of our sinful race.

The justification of a sinner under the Gospel consists in the three following things; 1. The pardon of sin; 2. An acquittal from punishment; and 3. A title to the rewards and blessings due by law only to perfect obedience. Sin, until it is pardoned, is still charged to the sinner's account. Hence he is in this position exposed to the punishment which his sin has deserved; but Christ, by taking the load of our sins upon His own shoulder; by being "smitten of God and afflicted;" by being "wounded for our transgressions;" by being "bruised for our iniquities;" and taking "the chastisement of our peace" upon himself, rendered it perfectly consistent for God to be honourably just, and still the justifier of the guilty. By Divine justice having expended the force of its fury upon the Son of God, as the sinner's surety, the sinner himself can be pardoned; can be released from the deserved penalty of his transgression; and can be declared as perfectly innocent in the court of heaven, as if he had never sinned.

God does even more than this for the justified; He gives .

him a claim to the rewards and blessings which only perfectly innocent beings could be entitled to. This is not absolutely necessary to complete the act of justification; the sinner might have been pardoned, and acquitted from the punishment due to his sins, and yet not be rendered the subject of future blessings, much less the blessings promised in the covenant of redemption. He might be annihilated. He might be placed in a state of happiness, imperfect and mixed like that of the present life; or he might be placed in a place of happiness unmixed and perfect, yet greatly inferior to that which shall be enjoyed by the penitent throng of Adam's race. God gives them a title to all that Deity can bestow upon a finite subject; to all that is necessary to constitute everlasting happiness, and honour, and glory, and enjoyment.

We come to consider—

II. The inefficiency of legal works to effect the sinner's justification. "For by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." By the law here is intended either the moral law, or the whole law given by Moses. You may take the one or the other, or both, for by the works of either law none can possibly be justified. If you ask, why? It is because no man since the fall of Adam (except the man Christ Jesus) has ever, or will ever in our imperfect state, pay the obedience required by the Divine law. No remittent imperfect obedience will satisfy the law of God. It must be *perfect* obedience throughout the whole course of one's existence. Were a man of 80 years to live 79 years, 11 months, 30 days, 23 hours, and 59 minutes in perfect obedience, and fail the last minute, or any minute of his life, the whole would be forfeited, and go for nothing; it would not weigh a single grain in the scale of his justification.

In the whole records of sacred and profane history, where can you fix upon a man who lived a perfectly holy, unblemished, and obedient life throughout the whole course of his existence in the world? Noah, of whom we read in our first lesson, is said to have been "a just man and

perfect in his generation." He "walked with God," and "found grace in the eyes of the Lord." Still he was not of an unblemished moral character. Abraham was distinguished from all the men of the earth, and was honoured with the name of the "father of the faithful;" but imperfection marked his steps. Moses was truly a "man of God," and was "faithful in all his house as a servant;" but Moses was not perfect, neither was Samuel, nor David, nor Elijah, nor any of the prophets, nor even the apostles of the Lord. They were all the best of men, but none of them were perfectly good men, inasmuch as no man can render that *perfect obedience* which the law requires; "by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." No moral act or religious performance, however great in magnitude; however brilliant in nature; however imposing in appearance, can merit the sinner's justification in the sight of God. Still, the sinner is not to be passive in his justification; there are exercises required from him; he must perform works without which he can never be justified.

This brings us to consider—

III. The means divinely appointed on man's part for his own justification. "That we might be justified by the faith of Jesus Christ." Then faith on the part of the sinner is God's plan of his justification. Not that faith in itself contains anything meritorious, but it is a condition prescribed, upon the exercise of which God has graciously engaged 'o pardon, and to release from the punishment of sin. Faith is the hinge on which the whole Evangelical system turns. "If ye believe not," said our Saviour, "that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." "He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not, shall not see life." All the future interests of man are suspended upon this nail, "justified by the faith of Jesus Christ." By this I understand the Apostle to mean, that the mind is brought to place simple and implicit reliance on the work, the suffering, and death of Christ, as the only meritorious ground of

acceptance with God, and thus it feels that as the Saviour suffered the penalty due for man's transgression in the capacity of the transgressor's surety, God can be just and at the same time the "Justifier of him who believeth in Jesus." Faith is confidence; it is trust; it is a full belief that the Son of God has done all for us that was necessary to meet the demands of Divine justice, and that those demands being met, the curse of the law is for ever removed from us, although hell-deserving sinners.

You may ask, why is faith regarded by the Almighty as sufficiently virtuous for justification? I answer, because it is a *voluntary* act of obedience to the command of God. Take away the *volition* from the act, and it ceases to contain such virtue. Faith in all instances is a voluntary conformity to truth, and the mind becomes convinced of the truth of any statement by examining the evidences respecting the statement. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." God does not compel us to believe on the name of His Son. He commands us to do so, and He places the evidences of His allsufficiency to save us at our disposal; then He leaves us to decide for ourselves. We may believe, or disbelieve; accept or reject, according to the inclinations of our own minds. God has endowed us with power of action in this case, He does not require from man what he is not both physically and morally able to perform. Therefore He requires faith in Jesus Christ as the voluntary condition of our justification. Faith is only the medium of our access to God. Reject this, and you are lost; embrace the condition—obey the command, and you are saved for ever. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, but he that believeth not the Son hath not life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."

The Fourth Sunday after Trinity.

MORNING SERVICE.—Second Lesson : Matthew iii.

Verse 11.—“ *I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance ;
but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes
I am not worthy to bear : he shall baptize you with the
Holy Ghost, and with fire.*”

JOHN THE BAPTIST was the harbinger or forerunner of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was the “voice crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight.” One of the Christian fathers called him “All voice,”—a voice in his habit—a voice in his diet—a voice in his whole conversation. His example was to teach others the lessons of self-denial, earnestness, and perseverance. The Papists very groundlessly regard the fact of John living in the wilderness as a precedent for their order of hermits. He was in the wilderness for a very different purpose from theirs. He was not there as a recluse, buried alive and doing nothing, but he was devoting his time in preaching and crying to others, whilst his auditors flocked around him from “Jerusalem, and from all Judea, and from all the region round about Jordan.” His voice emptied the towns and populated the desert, indicative of the future effect of the Gospel making the wilderness and the solitary places to be glad, and to blossom as the rose. The Baptist treated all persons who attended his ministry, with a candour and openness, with a boldness and faithfulness peculiar to himself and his great prototype Elijah, so that he is justly said to go before Christ in the spirit and power of Elijah, that is, he evinced that same fearless disposition in the discharge of his office among the Jews of all classes as did Elijah when he faced the idolatrous Israelites in the days of Ahab. When the hypocritical Pharisees and the

sceptical Sadducees came to hear him, he addressed them as a generation of vipers, and warned them to flee from the wrath to come, assuring them that their relationship to Abraham was no security from future judgment.

In his ministry he referred to another who was to succeed him, one who was far superior to himself in both His person and ministry ; so far above him in person that he was not worthy to carry His shoes after Him, and so far above him in His ministry as the substance is above the shadow—the reality above the anticipation—the thing signified above the sign,—“I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear, he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire.”

We have here First, the mission of John ; and Secondly, the mission of Christ.

I. We have the mission of John. “I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance.” This teaches us the rite, and the object of John’s ministry.

1. The rite was the baptism of water ; I baptize you with water. The baptism of water had been practised in the Jewish Church some hundreds of years before the time of John. It was invariably used in the case of proselytes when they were admitted into that Church. The initiation ceremony in the case of a male, consisted in circumcision, purification by water, and an offering, generally of a pair of turtle doves, or two young pigeons ; in the case of a female, the baptism of water and the offering were sufficient. Hence we find that the Jews made no inquiries of John respecting his baptism, but when they learnt that he was “neither that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet,” they made inquiries respecting his *authority* to baptize. The baptism of John was an introductory ordinance into the Christian dispensation, and being especially commissioned by Divine authority to practise the rite, he was superior to the greatest of the preceding prophets ; still it was not a Christian sacrament, as

it was not administered in the name of the Trinity, "Therefore the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." Baptism as a Christian sacrament was first instituted by Christ Himself, henceforth it was to be administered in the name of the Father as the Author of the Christian dispensation, in the name of the Son as its Founder, and in the name of the Holy Ghost as its Administrator. The baptism of John, therefore, was neither identical with the Jewish baptism of Proselytes, nor with the Gospel baptism of Christians, but was a connecting link between the two. It was like the twilight between night and day, partaking of the nature of both, but identical with neither.

2. We have the object of John's ministry, it was "Unto repentance." Repentance was the condition required from the subjects of his baptism. Repentance means a change of mind, and a change of mind is succeeded by a change of state and conduct. The Jews were henceforward to be changed both in themselves and in the constitution of their Church. The ancient rites and ceremonies were to be changed into a more genial form of observances, the types were to be absorbed in the antitype, the sacrifices were to be abolished by that one great sacrifice which was to take away the sins of the world. The people's minds must be changed in respect to all this. Being Abraham's seed would no longer recommend them to favour without his faith and obedience; children would be raised up unto Abraham out of the obdurate Gentile world, who might have been at that time as stones in feeling, and as stones in the estimation of the favoured Jews. The axe was to be "laid unto the root of the trees, therefore every tree," says John, "that beareth not good fruit, is hewn down and cast into the fire." There was no further favour to be shewn to either Jew or Gentile, independent of personal character. "Now God commandeth all men everywhere to repent." A radical change of heart, and a radical change of practice from evil to good, are absolute to constitute true Church membership under the

Christian dispensation. "I baptize you with water unto repentance," such was the substance of John's mission.

We come—

II. To the mission of Christ. "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire."

There are two branches of baptism uniformly taught in the New Testament,—the baptism of water, and the baptism of the Spirit. The one seems to be placed as introductory to the other, though not absolutely connected together. It is possible to be baptized with water, as the Jews were by John, without being baptized with the Holy Ghost; and we would not judge uncharitably respecting those who have not received water baptism. It may be possible to be baptized with the Holy Ghost, without being baptized with water. The baptism with water is the shadow, the baptism with the Holy Ghost is the substance; the baptism with water is the outward sign, the baptism with the Holy Ghost is the inward grace. John could administer the sign, but Christ alone could or can administer the grace.

The baptism of the Holy Ghost has a reference first to the outpouring of the Holy Ghost upon the apostles, both on and after the Day of Pentecost. On that day there "appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it rested upon each of them; and they were filled with the Holy Ghost;" consequently they were endowed with miraculous and spiritual gifts, so that they could speak with divers tongues, and perform wonders which established their reputation and ministry among the Jews and the Gentiles. Then there were other gifts bestowed by the same baptism, which were to be continued in the Church, not only during the age of the apostles and Christian fathers, but to the end of the world. This is the baptism of fire which John declares his successor would administer. The metaphor is a striking description of the nature of those operations on the hearts of sinners.

It need occasion no surprise that elemental fire is here as well as elsewhere employed to describe the workings of Divine grace through the agency of the Spirit in the heart; for no element can be more appropriately used to aid our conceptions of those effectual operations. This may be perceived by considering the various properties of fire, having the power to consume, to purify, to transmute, to enliven, and to tend upwards. All these separate and combined results of its agency illustrate and symbolize the working of the Spirit on the human mind.

1. Fire has the power of consuming. All the lighter material substances of earth yield to its ravages. It sweeps through the forest, and by its devouring flames consumes on its march the wood, the flowers, the grass, the corn, and every animal that may stand in its way. As to the more solid productions of nature, they all submit to its power, and become fuel to its insatiable spirit of devastation. This "hidden fire that trembles in the breast," consumes the corruptions of the heart; guilt is devoured by its flame, sorrow is destroyed by its power, all that is inimical to the glory of God and the welfare of the soul is removed by its influence. Like the fire, taken with tongs by a seraph from off the altar, touched the lip of the prophet, and it was said unto him, "thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin is pardoned;" so this divine fire takes away and consumes every sin.

2. Fire purifies. Gold and silver and other precious metals are made to pass through its ordeal, and by its workings the dross is separated from the valuable substance, and the worthless appendages are detached from the good. That dull, dark material, in the shape of ore which is brought over from California and Australia, would never pass current in its normal state as it is taken from the mines; it must be cast into the furnace, there to be reduced into a liquid stream, whence it is taken out a bright burnished article, worthy of ornamenting the palace of an emperor. So our souls are purified by the fire of the Spirit. "The Lord hath his fire

in Zion, and furnace in Jerusalem, to purify his people with the spirit of judgment, and with the spirit of burning. God said of His ancient people, "I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and try them as gold is tried." Ah! brethren, we should never be fit for heaven, the palace of the great King, were it not for this refining process. It is in thus being tried by fire our faith becomes more precious than gold that perishes, and our souls become refined for glory.

3. Fire transmutes into its own nature the objects on which it acts. What does not yield to it? Its subtle permeating power goes forth to subdue all surrounding objects to itself. To the coldest substance it conveys warmth; to the most unyielding material it gives pliability; and to the hardest metals it imparts its nature. All things receive and retain its influence. All things feel and own its power. Is it not so with the workings of the Spirit? His influences pervades the whole heart; the whole intellectual and moral powers are impregnated with His celestial principles, and are transformed into the same likeness. The understanding, the memory, the affection, the will, the conscience, are all permeated with His divine nature. "We are changed from glory to glory, even by the Spirit of the Lord." Like Moses coming down from the mount of God, we reflect the divine glory, and men take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus.

4. Fire again vivifies and comforts. Sterility and death are banished from the face of nature by the warming rays of the sun, without which all would be locked up in hopeless winter and night. There would be no life in the vegetable world, no comfort for man or beast. The fire cheers our homes, and enlivens our social circles; in its absence there would be no energy, no vitality. The Spirit has His life-giving power. He kindles into conscious happy existence all the dormant energies of the soul. How cold, how dead would be the exercise of our devotions without this divine fire! How disconsolate our state, how lonely our road, how com-

fortless our prospects were He to withdraw His energies !
"It is the Spirit that quickeneth."

Finally, fire tends upwards. From every position it will always ascend ; place it "under a bushel," take it down to the bowels of the earth, and gradually it will work itself to the surface. Hence the volcanic eruptions that so frequently take place, spreading devastation and death within their reach. When the Spirit works in the heart, the soul is drawn heavenwards. Whether a man be in a church or in a cloister, in a cave or on the mountain top, in private or in public, at home or abroad ; nothing can prevent his aspirations from tending upwards. The beloved disciple in the Isle of Patmos, and John Bunyan in the prison of Bedford, could ascend in contemplation to heaven, and hold communion with their God. Every exercise of the Spirit's graces tends towards heaven. Faith goes up in confidence to explore the things that are at God's right hand ; desire mounts as on eagle's wings to seek them, hope ascends to claim and appropriate them as her own, and love arising above the earth is absorbed in embracing them. As the treasure is above, the heart is there also ; the whole soul is raised to contemplate heavenly and eternal objects.

But in conclusion, the text represents Christ coming to baptize with a baptism of fire in respect to His enemies, as well as His saints. By the same metaphor, He appears in a way of comfort to His children, and in a way of terror to His enemies. He is a fire unto both. He sits in His Church as a refiner by fire. He is among His enemies as a consumer by fire ; a fire by which His people may take comfort, a fire by which His enemies must perish. Let the former be our lot ; let us pray to be baptized with the purifying fire of the Holy Ghost, then shall we ascend in its ambient flame to where sin and sorrow can find no home.

The Fourth Sunday after Trinity.

EVENING SERVICE.—First Lesson : 1 Sam. xiii.

Verses 13, 14.—“ *And Samuel said unto Saul, thou hast done foolishly : Thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God, which he commanded thee ; for now would the Lord establish thy kingdom upon Israel for ever. But now thy kingdom shall not continue : the Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the Lord hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the Lord commanded thee.*”

SAUL was exalted to a high station from a low position. He not only derived his origin from a low family, but also belonged to the smallest tribe in Israel. Some time before the days of Samuel the tribe of Benjamin was reduced by the consequences of an act of immorality to the number of six hundred men. From this insignificance it was never restored to any distinction as a tribe, but was afterwards incorporated with the tribe of Judah. This teaches us the solemn lesson that sin always bears in its train the retinue of poverty and disgrace. Saul's father was a husbandman, and devoted himself to his own private vocation. It is said that he was a “mighty man of power,” which refers to his physical strength, and not to any public authority which he possessed. God, in His providence, often chooses men of low degree to accomplish His purposes ; and we are told by Samuel why Saul was chosen to be king over Israel. His qualification for the office seems to have been confined to his personal appearance. We are told that “there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he, from his shoulders and upwards he was higher than all the people.” It must be remembered

that Saul was the people's king, and not God's king. It is true that God instructed Samuel to select and anoint him to be their king; but it was in answer to their request to give them a king, "*like other nations.*" Other nations at the time chose their kings from among men of the highest stature. Consistently with that a king was given to Israel. God and man see differently. Man looks at the outward appearance, but God regards the heart. The giant in body may be fit to rule men; but the great in mind are those who can please God. He listened to the people, and "gave them a king in His wrath," who should despise and oppress them. This He did because they persisted in having him after the faithful description given by Samuel of his character, chap. viii. 11—22. If at your leisure you will compare the character of Saul with the standard of God's choice, as detailed in Deut. xvii. 15—20, you will find that he was a king of *human*, not of *divine*, appointment.

To reduce the text to practical use we shall observe, first, the culpable points in Saul's character which displeased God, and, secondly, the serious consequences arising from those points.

I. The culpable points in Saul's character which displeased God.

We find that they were more of a negative than of a positive nature. There is no charge of any gross immorality brought against him throughout the whole of his history. Indeed, in this respect he excelled many of his successors, who professed to be better men. Even David and Solomon fell short of his example in external morals. However, his negative sins were highly blameable and offensive, which ought to serve as a beacon to warn us from adopting the same course.

Those sins may be considered under four heads. 1, impatience; 2, irreverence; 3, hypocrisy; and 4, disobedience.

1. Saul was guilty of the sin of *impatience*.

To this may be attributed the harshness which characterized his conduct throughout the whole of his reign. From the

time he went out to seek his father's asses until he voluntarily fell upon his own sword on Mount Gilboa, this was his constant failure. This was his first step towards losing the kingdom. If he had waited a few hours later for Samuel at Gilgal, who came after all within the appointed time, he would not, at least at that time, have incurred the sentence, "But now thy kingdom shall not continue." Alas! many kingdoms, many favours, many blessings, both temporal and spiritual, have been lost for the lack of this virtue. It is a characteristic which adorns the Christian profession, and commends us especially to the favour of God.

Impatience arises from want of trust. Thus it did in the case of Saul. Samuel had promised to meet him at Gilgal on the seventh day. That day had arrived,—it was fast wearing out,—Saul's impatience could not wait to see the close, for in the evening Samuel arrived. Why not have believed his word knowing that he had a Divine commission? How many instances of this kind there are in connexion with ourselves. God has given us great and precious promises; we expect their fulfilment in our time. God's time may not correspond. We mistrust His faithfulness, and take things into our own hands. This will not do: we thus incur His displeasure. Another instance of Saul's impatience was the rash command which he gave the people in the day of battle, not to eat any food in pursuing the enemy, saying with an oath, "Cursed be the man that eateth any food this day." The impetuosity of his temper on that occasion involved the loss of a much greater slaughter among the Philistines, and nearly cost his son Jonathan his life. Impatience leads to irritability. Unless the man obtains his desires at once his spirit becomes chafed, causing the greatest unhappiness to himself and all around him. This was evidently the evil spirit from the Lord which came upon Saul. It led him onward to all kinds of absurdities, and even incited him to kill David, the only man who was capable of soothing him in his distress.

2. Irreverence was another offensive trait in Saul's character. This was a uniform failure. When young, even his

servant knew more than he of the man of God. Any instance of reverence for Divine things drew forth remarks of surprise from his neighbours. When, on his return from his first interview with Samuel, he met with a company of prophets praising God, and being seized with their spirit he joined in that exercise, the surprise was so great that it occasioned the proverb, "Is Saul, the son of Kish, among the prophets?" From his history we may conclude that he never was what is properly called a changed man—never graciously renewed by the Holy Spirit, as every true believer is. He had "another heart," it is true; but it was a royal one, not a new and clean one; it was a spirit to govern, not a spirit to pray. Had this radical and spiritual change been effected in him, we should not find him uniformly disobeying God's command, making rash vows, manifesting horrible jealousy, becoming a prey to evil passions, being given up of God to work all manner of folly, even so far as to consult a witch. We see him, alas! throughout the whole of his life but a carnal man, upon whom external gifts and honours had been unmeritedly bestowed, but who possessed no genuine love towards God, nor hope for eternity. He built an altar for the first time unto the Lord, after his conquest of the Philistines; but it seemed more for show than for real worship, for he suggested that they should go and pursue the Philistines by night, and "spoil them until the morning," without waiting to consult the Lord at the altar which he had built. A practical remark suggests itself here; however costly may be the altars that may be raised, or sumptuous the sacrifices which may be offered, if we have no true reverence for God, we cannot expect a blessing to rest on any of our pursuits.

3. Saul was a hypocrite. There was no reality in his actions, especially in things pertaining to religion. We would not judge him too harshly, but there are no marks of sincerity to be traced in his conduct. His massacre of the Gibeonites, whom the Hebrews had bound themselves with a solemn oath to protect, his malicious treatment of David

under the cloak of friendship; but especially his dissimulation in the case of the Amalekites, prove the insincerity of his disposition. When Samuel charged him with unfaithfulness in the discharge of his mission, he persisted that he had fulfilled the Word of the Lord, and declared that the people had saved the best of the flocks for the purposes of sacrifice, whereas the whole tenor of Samuel's reproofs shows that it was done out of covetousness, with a desire to increase his own wealth.

But—

4. Disobedience was the great offence with which Saul was especially charged. It was manifested on more occasions than one. Disobedience is so comprehensive a term that it includes every sin. The execution of sin assumes various forms, but it invariably derives its origin from disobedience to the Divine command. The sin of our first parents consisted in this. Adam was especially commanded not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. He ate of it in direct violation of that command. This was his offence. This drew upon him and his posterity the just displeasure of God. Every sin, whether of commission or omission, from the fall of Adam to the end of the world, partakes of the same origin, hence the equal evil of all sin in the sight of God. When we examine the catalogue of human offences we recognize both a civil and moral gradation of evil, and are surprised why some offences so trivial in our estimation are so severely punished by the Almighty, whilst others of an aggravated nature go almost unpunished; for instance, "fifty thousand, three score and ten men" of Bethshemesh were slain for merely looking into the ark; Uzzah was struck dead for putting his hand to the ark, with the good intention of steadying it when shaken by the movement of the oxen; and seventy thousand of the men of Israel were slain by the pestilence for David's offence of numbering the people; whilst the same David was passed over with a little more than a censure for the awful crimes of adultery and murder. But "God seeth not as man seeth:" looking into the ark, or

touching it with an unhallowed hand, was so much a violation of a Divine command, as adultery and murder; and, under the circumstances, interfered more with the honour of God, which accounts for the treatment of the offenders. You may regard the sin of Saul a trivial sin, but God regarded it a great sin, because it was a sin of disobedience to a direct positive command. There are many sins which we may look lightly upon, but let us remember that the least sin is disobedience; therefore, equally punishable with crimes of the darkest dye.

We notice—

II. The serious consequences arising from Saul's offences.

Samuel says, "But now thy kingdom shall not continue; the Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the Lord hath commanded him to be captain over his people: because thou hast not kept that which the Lord commanded thee." Saul was a man after the people's heart; therefore, he was unworthy of the honour conferred upon him. The next king was to be a man after God's heart; therefore, his kingdom should be established. That this man was David is sufficiently clear from the sequel, but in what sense was he a man after God's heart, since in his moral character he was rather inferior than superior to Saul? Some infidels have ridiculed the revelation of God when comparing the conduct of David with this declaration, forgetting that in reference to his private moral conduct the phrase is never used. But he was so in the strict attention which he paid to the law and worship of God, in admitting that God was king over Israel, and regarding himself merely as His vicegerent—in never attempting to change any of those laws, or in the least to change the Israelitish constitution. In all his public conduct he acted according to the Divine mind, and fulfilled the prescribed will of his Master. It was in this sense *alone* he was "a man after God's own heart."

Saul lost his kingdom —

1. Because his disobedience was a practical denial of the

authority of God, and of the obligations of his subjects to obey His commands, and submit to His will. When Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, was commanded to release the Hebrews, he denied the authority of the Almighty, saying, "Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice, to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go." The same principle actuated the mind of Saul when he set his own will in opposition to the will of God. It was in fact making himself supreme: subject to no other power, acknowledging no higher authority. This, in effect, is the conduct of every impenitent sinner. "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." It denies His authority, setting up his own will against His. Will not God punish for this? Did He not punish Adam and all his race for one act of disobedience? Did He not punish the old world? Did He not punish the Sodomites? Did He not punish the Egyptians? Did He not punish the Israelites? Did He not punish the house of Eli? Did He not punish Saul? Did He not punish thousands besides, perhaps for acts of disobedience far less aggravated than we have been guilty of? We thus dishonour him, and He will discard us.

2. Saul's loss of the kingdom became irretrievable through his continued disobedience. If you notice particularly, the sentences in this passage do not at all bear the character of a final decision. It seems more by way of warning, telling him that *if he disobeyed*, his kingdom should not continue, for after this he is given another chance of retrieving God's favour; and it was after the second trial in the case of the Amalekites, Samuel said to him, "I will not return with thee, for thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord hath rejected thee from being king over Israel." Is it not thus He treats every sinner? He never strikes without warning; but if by persisting in a course of impenitent disobedience, the final sentence be allowed to go forth, no power in heaven or earth can change the decision of God. "For what is a man profited if he gain the whole world, and lose

his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" And remember, brethren, in conclusion, that our loss, if finally rejected, will involve infinitely greater consequences than the loss threatened in the text. To Saul it was but the loss of an earthly throne, of a kingdom that must sooner or later fall into decay; but ours will be the loss of a throne of eternal glory, of a kingdom which shall endure as long as God Himself. Feeling this, "what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness?"

The Fifth Sunday after Trinity.

MORNING SERVICE.—First Lesson : 1 Sam. xv.

Verse 32.—“ *And Agag came unto him delicately. And Agag said, Surely the bitterness of death is past.*”

HAVING entered fully into the character of Saul on last Sunday evening, we need now but refer merely to the special mission which he received to destroy the Amalekites, and how he discharged it. God had a quarrel against the Amalekites for their base conduct towards His people in their passage through the wilderness when they were delivered from Egypt. We have the story in the seventeenth chapter of the Book of Exodus, which is repeated in an aggravated form in the twenty-fifth of Deuteronomy. God says to Israel, through Moses, “Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way, when ye were come forth out of Egypt; how he met thee by the way, and smote the hindermost of thee, even all that were feeble behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary; and he feared not God. Therefore it shall be, when the Lord thy God hath given thee rest from all thine enemies round about, in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance to possess it, that thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven; thou shalt not forget it.” God then swore that He would have “war with Amalek from one generation to another,” and then in process of time He would “utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek.” This was the work which Saul was now appointed to execute. The iniquity of the Amalekites was now full, and he is expressly commanded to slay and destroy all before him; out of pity he was not to spare either man or woman, infant or suckling; out of covetousness he was not to save either ox or sheep, camel or

ass. This is a striking instance of the retributive justice of God. The judgment may be long delayed, but it will come at last ; though divine justice strikes slowly, it strikes surely ; and often the longer it is delayed the more severe it is when it comes. How true the declaration in the Second Commandment, "visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me." Lord, how unsearchable are thy judgments, yet how incontestible is thy righteousness ! Saul, however, did not fully attend to God's command, although he said that he did : he spared the king and the best of the flocks of the Amalekites. His vindication of himself was, that he had brought Agag the king alive, which was in his estimation equal to killing him ; as to the flocks, he blamed the people who wished to save them under the pretence of sacrificing them unto the Lord, but more probably for Saul and their own use. The answer of Samuel is a proof that his vindication of himself was false. "And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord ? Behold to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity, and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king." God had devoted the whole to destruction : Saul saved the best for his own use, which was an act of disobedience that cost him and his posterity the kingdom.

Agag being spared as a trophy of the victory, was a prisoner in the hands of the Israelites when Samuel arrived. Being brought into Samuel's presence, it is said that he came delicately ; either he came in a stately manner to show that he was a king, and therefore to be treated with respect ; or he came in a soft, effeminate manner as one who had not been accustomed to hardships ; or he came cringingly as a criminal begging for mercy, intending thereby to move compassion. He said, "Surely the bitterness of death is passed." Having been spared by Saul, that man of war, he

might have thought that there could be no danger from an aged prophet, a man of peace ; but his vain hopes were frustrated when Samuel "hewed him in pieces," or commanded him to be hewn in pieces "before the Lord in Gilgal." Independently of the historical circumstances, the text furnishes us with two subjects for consideration. First, that death is bitter ; secondly, the grounds on which it may be said that the bitterness of death is past.

I. Death is bitter. It dismays the stoutest heart ; it is the cup of which none like to drink. It is awfully bitter to the wicked, it is also bitter to the good. It was so to David when he said, "the snares of death encompassed me round about ;" it was so to Paul when he said, "not that we would be unclothed but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life ;" it was so even to our Blessed Saviour Himself, when He prayed in the garden of Gethsemane, "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me." Doubtless the bitterness of death was greater to Him than it can possibly be to any ordinary person, for suffering "death for all men," all that could make it bitter was mixed up in the cup which He had to drink.

In every case, however, there is a bitterness which we cannot avoid, because—

1. There are bodily pains to be endured which are hard to bear. Pain, both of body and mind, is the consequence of sin ; we naturally expect the greatest pain at the execution of the sentence ; death being the penal sentence for sin, the pain to be endured must be great both in anticipation and in reality. Often, no doubt, the throes of expiring moments are not accompanied with so much pain as that previously suffered in the course of a trying life. The feelings may have been blunted by the wasting of lingering disease, the mind may have been crushed out of consciousness by the weight of foregoing sorrow. The nature of the disease also may interfere with the amount of physical suffering. Under any circumstances we cannot look forward to death without

connecting with it the culminating point of human suffering in the flesh. Death consequently is bitter. In most cases, the tenant will not quit its frail tenement without a struggle, the windows are darkened, all the inlets of enjoyment are stopped, and even the walls are beaten down before the inmate departs. You may have witnessed some of your friends in the pain of death. The pangs of convulsive agony have made you shudder, and you were compelled to turn away in anguish. It cannot be denied that the separation of soul and body is a bitter process.

2. There are ties to be severed which you would wish to be preserved. There are but few persons in any station of life who have not got connections which are as dear to them as their own lives. There are the relationships of parents and children, of husbands and wives, of brothers and sisters, of intimate acquaintances and bosom friends; many of those are dependent upon each other for support, comfort and happiness. It is hard to part; the mother is sometimes called upon to leave the infant that hangs upon her bosom, or the infant is taken away from the arms of the mother; the parents are snatched away from their children, leaving them on the ocean of life, like a vessel forsaken by her captain without a directing hand to stand at the helm; the husband and wife who seem absolute for each other's existence are severed by death; the brother and sister who are devoted to each other's interest must part; the friends whose love, like that of David and Jonathan exceed the love of women, must separate to meet no more upon earth. The sovereign, perhaps in the midst of a scheme of diplomacy, important for the benefit of his subjects, and the lasting welfare of his kingdom, is called to resign the reins into other hands. The minister of God may have struck out designs of usefulness, which if carried out would be of permanent good to thousands, but he is not allowed to perfect them. The man of science has just hit upon an invention, or a discovery which promises to benefit future generations, no other person has been let into the secret; he dies, and it

is lost. The man of business has just entered upon a mighty speculation which himself only can accomplish; if he lives, it succeeds, but he dies, and his family is ruined. Most people are unprepared for death, even in setting their "house in order," and providing for those whom they leave behind in pecuniary matters. This embitters the expiring moments, there is a pang of mental anguish as well as bodily pain. Ties so near are not torn asunder without a sigh. Oh! it is a bitter feeling to fall into the grasp of death, knowing that those who are dear to us are plunged into difficulties and distress. Then there is the separation of soul and body, which have been so closely united that a bond of sympathy has existed between them through every step of life; the one never suffers without calling out the feelings of the other. To snap asunder such a union causes pain; death is bitter.

3. There is a personal uncertainty involved in the consequences of death which embitters it to us.

"Life and immortality" it is true, "have been brought to light by the Gospel." The teaching of Christ and His Apostles have defined to us the boundaries of another world. We are told that there are rewards and punishments to be awarded to all according to their characters. We are told that the place of reward is a mansion of bliss where dwells all that is holy and good. God reigns there supreme. Christ sits there at the right hand of the Father the great centre of all the glory of the place. The holy angels are there in crowded myriads surrounding the throne with anthems of praise. The "spirits of just men made perfect" are there joining in the song, and blending their voices with the highest archangel in magnifying the Redeemer's name.

We are told that there is also a place of torment where the wicked shall be punished after death, where they shall be in endless destitution and wretchedness, and the smoke of their torments ascending up for ever and ever. Contrasting those two places, the future home of all mortals, it becomes a question of the most serious consequence for us to know which of the two is to be our destiny. Death will decide

the question. There will be no change of dispositions after that solemn event ; our chances are all confined to the present life which is our state of probation. It is to many a throw at hazards, a leap in the dark, most persons are uncertain respecting the result. Doubts and fears fill the mind at the approach of the last enemy, and thousands would give untold millions if they could bribe him from their doors. The pharisee who had buoyed up his hope with a false righteousness, now trembles on the brink ; the profligate who trusted that he should have time to repent, is now filled with horror ; the hypocrite who depended upon God's unconstitutional mercy, now dreads the consequences. Death is bitter because people know not where they are going.

We observe—

II. The grounds on which it may be said that the bitterness of death is past. Many think the bitterness to be past, when it is not really so ; they put that evil day far from them which is very near. When they have just escaped a real or an imaginary danger which at the time filled them with apprehension and horror because death stared them in the face, now they fancy themselves safe, and think nothing of its approach, whilst at the same time the greatest danger is yet to come. Agag thought himself safe in the hands of a tender-hearted prophet, when he had escaped from the hands of a cruel king ; little did he think that Samuel as the agent of God was compelled to do that from which even Saul must have shrunk without a Divine command. If you drive away the bitterness of death, either by oblivion, or by a vain hope in the mercy of God to forgive you at last without any preparation for death, you will be ultimately disappointed like Agag when "Samuel hewed (him) in pieces before the Lord in Gilgal."

There is a class, however, who can adopt this language, and can add with David, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil."

There are three things necessary to constitute this confidence.

1. An implicit trust in the finished work of Christ as forming a solid groundwork of the soul's safety. When our Saviour entered the list against man's foes, He announced "I will ransom them from the power of the grave, I will redeem them from death ; O death, I will be thy plagues ; O grave, I will be thy destruction." When in His own person He suffered death for all men, He conquered him who had the power of death, even the devil. Divesting himself of His grave-clothes, and arising in victory on the morning of the third day, He trampled that power under His feet, and robbed death of his terrors to all His faithful followers. Trusting in what He accomplished, and exercising unmoving faith in the truth of His promises, the Christian faces death without alarm, knowing that he has only to face a vanquished foe. "Surely the bitterness of death is past."

2. A hopeful consciousness of pardoned sin gives this confidence. "The sting of death is sin." It is sin that arms death with its terrors—it is sin that drops the bitter ingredient into the cup ; when the sin is removed, death is harmless. Forgiveness of sin casts a ray of bright sunshine into the gloom of the valley. You step on sure ground ; God's promises support you. The Spirit's assurance gives you a hope full of immortality ; and you enter into the passages rejoicing in the God of your salvation. This assurance gives vigour to the soul, so that every Christian enters eternity with the feeling of the holy martyr who exclaimed at the stake, "welcome the cross of Christ, welcome eternal life." "Surely the bitterness of death is past."

3. A prospect of a glorious resurrection at the last day fully establishes the confidence. The grave is a gloomy cell. The body being a companion of worms, and being reduced to dust, after being the vehicle of animation and beauty in this world, strikes a thrill of bitter grief into the heart, but looking beyond the grave to the time when "the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible"—anticipating the reformation of the body in greater beauty and glory than it ever possessed upon earth,—feeling that our vile body

shall be changed and fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body, then we are reconciled to the degradation, we anticipate death with joy, and look into the grave with a degree of happiness, for "Surely (now) the bitterness of death is past."

Brethren, what is your prospect in death? We all shrink from it as an enemy which we should be glad to avoid, but do what we may, come it will sooner or later. Are you prepared for it? Have you reason to hope that its sting has been removed from you? Then it will be a cause for joy, and not for sorrow, as it will be the release of a prisoner from his jail, and the introduction of an heir to his throne.

The Fifth Sunday after Trinity.

EVENING SERVICE.—Second Lesson : Phil. i.

Verse 6.—“*Being confident in this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.*”

PHILIPPI was the first city in which the Gospel was preached in Europe. The place was impressed on the mind of St. Paul both by the success which he obtained, and by the sufferings which he endured in the discharge of his ministry there. The first trophy of the Gospel there was Lydia, the purple seller from Thyatira, “whose heart the Lord opened, that she might attend unto the things which were spoken of Paul.” Next to her came the “damsel possessed with the spirit of divination,” upon which occasion Paul and Silas were ill-used by the magistracy and infuriated mob. They were cruelly beaten, and thrust into prison; this led to the conversion of the jailer and his family, and consequently many others in the city. The Apostles having departed, the principles which they preached continued to flourish until a numerous church was planted in the colony. The seed was sown in the storms of winter; those storms tended to foster, rather than to destroy it; spring and summer succeeded, and an abundant harvest was produced. The devil often makes mistakes in his tactics: he intended that persecution should destroy the seed in the germ, but on the contrary it irrigated the soil and forced the growth.

A mutual attachment was established between Paul and the Philippian Christians, which neither distance of place, nor length of time, nor reversion of circumstances could obliterate. Time after time had they administered to his temporal wants, whilst he reciprocated their kindness with spiritual instruc-

tion and consolation. He being now a prisoner at Rome, they sent Epaphroditus, their bishop, to him with a liberal contribution for his use, on the return of whom he sends this affectionate letter to them, partly to testify his thankfulness for the relief received from them, but principally to confirm them in the faith, to encourage them to walk worthy of their holy vocation, to warn them against seducers and judaizing teachers, and to incite them to various Christian duties.

In the text he expresses his confidence of their final perseverance in the graces of the Gospel, feeling assured that He who had begun in them the good work would also perfect the same. The doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints is one fully established in the Holy Scriptures: indeed there seems to be so much importance attached to it that both Christ and His Apostles insist upon it in the most positive terms.

In bringing the subject before you this evening as represented in the text, we shall first notice the character of Divine grace in the soul; secondly, the confidence of St. Paul in the continuation of this grace; and thirdly, the time when it shall be perfected.

I. The character of Divine grace in the soul. It is called "a good work."

The work of regenerating grace in the soul is a good work, not only because it is the work of God, the author of all good, but also because it is the great source and vital principle, whence all good works proceed and flow. It is the root of the tree of righteousness, on which grows the fruit of holiness adorning the Christian character in all the positions of life. This good work is produced by the operations of God's Spirit quickening and converting the soul, eradicating from it every tendency to evil, and implanting in it the principle of light, of repentance, of faith, of love, of godly fear, of obedience, of patience, and of all that may "adorn the doctrine of our Lord Jesus Christ." It is "a good work, as it releases the man from the power of sin and Satan, so that he is no

longer taken captive by the devil at his will ; from henceforth sin has no power over him to lead him to commit iniquity with a willing mind. It is "a good work," as it induces man to answer the end of his creation in glorifying God by his life and conversation. It is "a good work," as it teaches man to perform the practical duties of life in accordance with the will of God. It makes him a good parent, a dutiful son, a kind husband, a loyal subject, a faithful friend, a helping neighbour, a useful member of society in all respects. It makes him diligent, honest, truthful, sober, chaste, persevering, and obliging, "Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord."

But our object at present is to establish the final perseverance of those in whom this good work is begun ; therefore, we come to notice—

II. The confidence of Paul in the continuation of the work of Divine grace in the soul,—“Being confident in this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perfect it.” God never works by halves. * He never commences a work without completing it. It is not His practice in nature, neither is it His practice in grace. His very nature, without any further argument, would be a sufficient guarantee for the safety and final perseverance of all His true people.

Truly there are some passages of holy writ, if taken disjointedly, that tend to favour the notion of a possibility of falling into perdition after partaking of the operations of Divine grace ; but it is not all gold that glitters. All are not Israel who are of Israel. There are counterfeits as well as sovereigns ; there are fictitious as well as genuine principles ; there is chaff on the threshing floor, as well as corn ; there are tares in the field as well as wheat. The reputation and appearance of Christianity do not constitute a subject of saving grace. It is not ours to draw the line of demarcation, the distinguishing power lies in God alone. He sees not as man sees : we look at the outward appearance, and are often

mistaken in the real character of man, but He examines the heart and cannot form an unrighteous judgment.

The final perseverance of all true saints is proved—

1. From the descriptive nature of the work begun in their souls. It is called a creation, a regeneration, and a resurrection. In speaking of the work of grace, the apostle by writing to the Ephesians says, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained, that we should walk in them." Our Saviour, in His conversation with Nicodemus, says, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Again, St. Paul says in the same chapter to the Ephesians, "And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." And again, "Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved)." When an object is once created it cannot then be uncreated; when a child is once born, he cannot be again unborn; the fact of a resurrection gives us the idea of a continuation of life.

2. The universal testimony of Scripture establishes the fact. If the good work be begun and not perfected, the promise is not "yea, and amen," which says, "And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." (Jer. xxxii. 40.) If the good work be begun and not perfected Christ was mistaken when He said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me, and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me is greater than all; and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." (John x. 27—29.) If the good work be begun and not perfected, the expression cannot be true, "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." If the good work be begun and not perfected, St. Paul

mised the Corinthians when he said, "Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ;" and if the good work be begun and not perfected, it is vain confidence he expresses in the text, "Being confident of this very thing; that He which hath begun a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ."

3. God's love to His people is unchangeable. He declares, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." Having loved His own which are in the world, Christ loved them unto the end. St. Paul was persuaded that "neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

4. They were given to Christ to be saved, and He is perfectly competent to fulfil the will of the Father. He died with the object of making them eternally happy. "He loved the Church, and gave himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to himself a glorious Church not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." He has not changed His purposes, His sacrifice is still sufficient to answer the end. He ever liveth to intercede for His people, and there is a peculiar union between Him and them which neither time nor eternity can dissolve. It will be *His* glory as well as that of the Father and the Holy Ghost to perpetuate the good work in them unto the end.

Finally, the Holy Spirit is given them, "whereby they are sealed unto the day of redemption," and "which is the earnest of (their) inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory." The earnest being of the same nature as the inheritance is a guarantee that the whole shall be finally obtained.

Still, brethren, all this is not carried on independently of our exertions. It is the beginning and the perfecting of a

good work, but we must work as well as God. He works in us both to will and to do, and we must “work *out* our own salvation with fear and trembling.” No one possesses saving grace, but he who acts out the principles of grace. It is not like cold brimstone lying dormant in the soul, until some heavenly spark comes to kindle it into a flame, but it is like leaven in the meal making itself felt, and working gradually but surely throughout the whole lump until every portion of the life and conversation is impregnated with its influence. Such a man can no less live an active, holy life, than the spark can avoid flying upwards, or that the river can avoid returning to its source.

III. We have the time when the good work shall be perfected; He “will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.” The day of Jesus Christ referred to here is the day of judgment—which is repeatedly designated so in Scripture. It will be the day in which Jesus Christ shall appear the second time upon earth; not in feebleness, and shame, and sorrow, and pain as He did the first time, but in power and might—with thousands of saints and His holy angels,—the day in which Jesus Christ shall appear in His own glory, and in the glory of His Father—the day when He shall come to “judge the quick and the dead,”—the day when He shall be fully glorified in His saints, and when He shall inflict full retribution upon all His enemies—the day when heaven, earth, and hell shall acknowledge His unqualified Divine power without a dissentient voice, “when at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth.” It will be in that day that the good work which is begun on earth, and continued in heaven, shall be perfected.

No saint is perfect upon earth. Every Christian has his faults, and is conscious of imperfection. Although the good work is begun, it is not finished. It is not a work to be accomplished in a day. The power of sin is at once broken, but the fragments will remain scattered over the soul as long

as it continues connected with flesh. Like a formidable castle shattered by the storms has lost its resisting force, but the *debris* of the ruins is still to be cleared away, and they will for a time occasion some difficulty to occupy the ground, sin loses the great power of captivating, by the act of the Spirit justifying the sinner, but its power of annoying will still remain until by the sanctifying influences of the same Spirit the ruins shall be removed. This is the work of a life. At death the last purifying process shall be given to the soul, when it shall be completely freed from the effects as well as from the power of sin.

In heaven also the good work will not be fully performed for ages to come. Even the soul's happiness will not be perfect until the day of resurrection; it will indeed have no enemy to contend with, but it will be separated from an old companion whom it expects to rejoin, and till the union shall be effected there will be something wanting. The body on *its* part will be still undergoing purification in the earth, or in the sea. Death, which is the progeny of sin, has reduced it to ruins, and those ruins shall not be repaired, until death, "the last enemy that shall be destroyed," shall be vanquished. In the day of Jesus Christ all this will be accomplished. The body shall be raised from the dust of ages, all its essential parts shall be reformed in beauty and glory; it shall be inspired with animation and vigour, and clothed with endless immortality, fashioned like unto the glorious resuscitated body of Christ Himself. In that image it shall be reunited to the soul when the "good work" shall be performed: when the day of that redemption planned by the Father, wrought by the Son, and applied by the Holy Ghost shall dawn and continue without a succeeding night. The eye of the apostle was fixed upon this day when he wrote to the Philippians, "Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."

Brethren, has the good work been *begun* in you? If it be begun, God will carry it on. Let us beware lest we deceive

ourselves, taking a counterfeit for the genuine thing, and resting upon the shadow of religion without possessing the substance. Let us beware lest having a name to live, we are still dead. We may possess ample proofs of the existence of the reality, for it leads us to hate sin, to love holiness ; it teaches *us* also to "abound in every good work."

The Sixth Sunday after Trinity.

MORNING SERVICE.—Second Lesson : Luke xx.

Verse 25.—*“And he said unto them, Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which be Cæsar’s, and unto God the things which be God’s.”*

ALL classes among the Jews, like Pilate and Herod, sank their mutual animosities in the common hatred of the Lord Jesus Christ. Scribes and Pharisees, Sadducees and Herodians, vied with each other in their contempt of Him, and in their desire to destroy Him. We find plans suggested, conspiracies formed, and villanies perpetrated with the view of making out a legal charge against Him in the violation of either the Jewish or Roman law. This chapter brings before us two or three occasions on which those attempts were made. One was the questioning by what authority He had purged the temple of the buyers and sellers, intending to draw upon Him the hatred of the populace for infringing upon their customs. Failing in this they suborned spies, who with a hypocritical pretence to justice tried to entrap Him on the legality of the Roman dominion in the country ; here they thought that they were sure of their prey. Both Matthew and Mark tell us that those spies were of the Pharisees and Herodians. The former were against paying tribute to Cæsar, looking upon the Roman Emperor as an usurper ; the latter were in favour of the tribute, as by the appointment and support of the Romans Herod ruled. These two contending parties concluded, that, let our Saviour answer as He would, they should ensnare Him ; if to please the Pharisees He denied the legality of paying tribute, then He could be accused of sedition ; or if to gratify the Herodians He defended the custom, then He could be

accused of being an enemy to the liberty of His country, and would be exposed to a popular odium. But observe with what wisdom and caution our Saviour answers them. He perceived their craftiness, and said unto them, "Why tempt ye me?" His penetrating eye could scan their thoughts and easily detect their disguise; they were wolves in sheep's clothing, and He treats them according to their character. Instead of gratifying them with a direct answer, He calls for the Roman penny which was then in circulation, and asks them whose superscription it bore, they answer, "Cæsar's." Upon this He gives them a decided answer, "Render unto Cæsar the things which be Cæsar's." By admitting the circulation of the Roman coin among you, you acknowledge the authority of the Roman Emperor over you. As subjects of his dominion, give unto him therefore his just dues, but at the same time forget not the tribute which is due unto God. Observe the proper distinction between the one and the other, and act justly towards both. We have here Cæsar's due, and God's due; or in other words, that which we owe to the world, and that which we owe to God.

I. Christ teaches us what we owe unto the world. "Render unto Cæsar the things which be Cæsar's." Every man has duties in respect to this world, which the Bible, as well as reason insists upon, and gives the minutest instructions how they are to be performed.

We have duties to perform :—

1. As *citizens*. Christianity teaches men to be good citizens. The most loyal subjects of a realm are those who acknowledge and obey the authority of Christ. Our Saviour was no enemy to magistracy and civil government, there was no truer contributor to the king's dues than He who was "King of kings." He preached it, He practised it, He never demurred respecting the payment of the tribute in question. On the only occasion of which we read that it was demanded of Him, He performed a miracle to procure the amount, that no

offence might be given. "The powers that be are ordained of God," and whether the ruling prince derives his title by descent, by election, or by conquest, the subjects are bound by the law of God to give him tribute. We are also taught to obey the existing laws of the realm in which we live. A spirit of disloyalty and treason, of sedition and rebellion, is contrary to all the dictates of Scripture. We need only quote the authority of St. Paul. "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers, for there is no power but of God, the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the powers, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation, &c." Rom. xiii. 1—7.

2. We have duties as *neighbours*. Those duties our Saviour summed up in one sentence, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." To carry out the substance of this declaration, we have only to ask the question, how do we love ourselves? If in our right minds we would not hate ourselves, we would not illuse ourselves, we would not bear false witness against ourselves, we would not wish ourselves harm; but on the contrary we sympathise with ourselves, and do all in our power to further our own interest, and desire that others would do the same by us. The golden rule of Scripture is, "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even to them: for this is the law and the prophets." There is also a common rule not to be forgotten in the graduated state of society as it exists in the world, that is, we ought to treat our superiors with respect, our equals with attention, and our inferiors with kindness. Perhaps in our transactions with men, there are but few in whom we can place implicit confidence; undue general familiarity may be as injurious to other's interests, as it would be destructive to our own happiness; but whilst we make but few our bosom friends, let us observe a course of affability and charity to all: "Render unto Cæsar the things which be Cæsar's." "Owe no man anything, but to love one another."

3. We have duties as *members of families*. Our domestic circles are composed of different members who have their respective positions to hold and their respective duties to observe. There are husbands, and there are wives; there are parents, and there are children; there are masters, and there are servants; there are brothers, and there are sisters; each one has a part to perform for the success and the happiness of the whole. The one is to govern, the other is to obey, each to study the other's disposition and temper. When we outstep our legitimate spheres in the discharge of duties, anarchy and confusion are caused in the arrangements of families, and there can be no order and happiness in what would be miscalled a *home*. The duties of husbands and wives, of parents and children, of masters and servants, are forcibly described by St. Paul in his Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians, which ought to be engraven on the walls of every house, and in the heart of every domestic. The same regulations ought to be observed amongst employers and employed in every department of business, without which there will be no rendering to Cæsar the things which be Cæsar's.

II. There are duties which we owe especially to God.

The things which are God's are perfectly distinct from the things which are Cæsar's; and whilst we render what is due to the one, we must not at our peril withhold from the other what He justly claims. There are too many who are anxious to pay their just debts to their fellow-men, but neglect the most important of all debts, which are those due to Him who holds our breath in His hands, in whom we live, move, and have our being.

In paying our debts to God, we are to regard the justness of His claim—the extent of our obligations—the correctness of our motives—and the strictness of our account.

1. We must regard the justness of His claim. His requirements are not founded on the force of usurped authority, as were those of Cæsar. The Jews might have

objected to the claim of Cæsar on the ground of an oppressive custom established as the results of an unjust subjugation by the conquest of a superior power. The claims of the world are often forced upon us by the usurpation of circumstances. One man may oppress another. A king may demand more than is just from his subjects, an employer may require more than is right from the employed, an arbitrary government may be exercised in a family, and one neighbour may exact more than his due from another ; but God is just ; every demand that He makes is established in equity and righteousness. Whatever He asks from us He has a right to ask. His nature as a just, holy, and true Being, would preclude the idea of any oppressive demand. "What shall we say then, Is there unrighteousness with God ? God forbid." Being possessed of every natural and moral perfection, He cannot command but what is consistent with the strictest justice. Being all-sufficient and self-dependent, He can suffer no loss nor harm. Being possessed of all things, He can stand in need of nothing ; and having formed all things, He can fear nothing. He has no temptations therefore to injustice, having all power and authority in His own hand, doing as He pleases, and when He pleases. "The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works," therefore He will not require from us but what is strictly just.

2. We must regard the extent of our obligations to Him. Who is He, and what are we ? "It is he that hath made us, and not ourselves ; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture." If He be the author of our existence, that existence belongs to Him ; hence when we are commanded to "present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God," it is but our "reasonable service." He not only made us, but preserves us. He who observes the fall of a sparrow, feeds the raven, and clothes the lily, takes care of us. He regulates our functions, protects our lives, directs our circumstances, guides our steps, and numbers the hair of our heads. When the seasons roll around burdened with innumerable

blessings, the rays of the sun, which might have been the shafts of death, are unto us the messengers of life ; the winds of heaven, which might have carried on their wings the seeds of disease, bring unto us the ingredients of health ; the clouds, which might have dropped poison into every cup, convey unto us refreshing showers ; the earth, which might have opened to form our graves, puts forth its energies for our sustenance. Our homes have been preserved from the ravages which stalk along in the darkness ; our persons have been preserved from the arrow which flies abroad in the light. By day and by night, in summer and in winter, we have hitherto been protected from destructive dangers, and have been the recipients of untold mercies. Even all this does not form the limits of our obligations, these are but "a part of His ways." What will you say to the boundless spiritual favours which God has provided for us ? What will you say to His "unspeakable gift," the gift of His only begotten Son, whom He spared not, but delivered Him up for us all ? What will you say to the gifts of His Spirit, which include justification, forgiveness of sins, adoption into His family, strength in weakness, comfort in distress, guidance in the road, sanctification of mind, and endless glory in heaven ? Oh ! brethren, have you ever thought of the extent of your obligations to "Render unto God, the things which be God's ?" The tribute due to the world, including all its various connections, form but a fraction in comparison with the tribute due to Him. He deserves our souls, ourselves, our all. The world in which we live requires our care and industry, our diligence and perseverance. Professions, and sciences, and trade, and various avocations require a portion of our time and talents. Society requires our honesty and fidelity, our sympathy and help. Families and friends require a portion of our affections and attention ; but the whole substance of our love and gratitude, our devotion and praise, are due to God. The issues of a fountain may nourish and benefit surrounding objects on their course, but the stream must return to its source, and there lodge the substance of its virtues.

3. In rendering unto God His dues, we are to observe the correctness of our motives. He "desires truth in the inward parts," regarding the motive of the act rather than the act itself. Hence many brilliant deeds of devotion and liberality which dazzle the eyes of the passers by, and draw shouts of applause from admiring crowds, fall perfectly worthless in the estimation of God, because they are done from a motive foreign to a desire to serve and glorify Him. The two mites of a poor widow are more acceptable when given from pure devotion, than the most princely gift if tendered merely to be seen of men. The Scribes and Pharisees extended their righteousness beyond the requirements of the law, and tithed the mint and rue, and all manner of herbs in their gardens; but passing over judgment and the love of God, they were rejected. A Pharisaical attention to the outward forms of religion is not sufficient of itself to render unto God the things which be God's. The whole must be actuated by a principle of love to render the tribute acceptable.

Finally. In the performance of our duty to God, there must be a regard to the strictness of the account. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body; according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." *According to that he hath done.* The amount, the time, and the manner of doing will be taken into account. We are not accountable for the success of our labours, but we are for the discharge of our duties. That account will be in proportion to our opportunities and privileges. We are not all favoured with an equal number of talents, and we may not all have the same facilities to exercise the talents we possess. "According as a man hath received will be required of him." "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him much will be required."

In conclusion. Let us remember that in this world we are placed in the position of stewards, and St. Paul says that "it is required of stewards that a man be found faithful." We have a trust in respect to Cæsar, we have a trust in

respect to God. We are not to attend to the former at the expense of neglecting the latter. We must live for two worlds. Let not our minds be too much engrossed with the things of this world, to prevent our attention to the things of the next. But whilst we are "not slothful in business," let us be "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord."

The Sixth Sunday after Trinity.

EVENING SERVICE.—First Lesson : 2 Sam. xix.

Verse 12.—“ *Ye are my brethren ; ye are my bones and my flesh : wherefore then are ye the last to bring back the King ?* ”

THE reign of David was a striking type of the reign of Christ, as David himself was a personal type of the person of Christ. Both those reigns were of Divine appointment, established by Jehovah to accomplish His unerring designs for His own glory and the welfare of His people. When David was raised to the throne of Israel and Judah, it was to secure a line of kings from the tribe of which the Messiah was to proceed. When Christ established His kingdom upon earth, it was to secure a line of subjects that should surround His throne in heaven. The crown sat upon the head of David with grace and comeliness ; it sits upon the brow of Christ with far greater glory and majesty. David's reign was conducted on the principles of truth and righteousness ; Christ is a King who reigns in righteousness, equity and judgment being the habitation of His throne. David had to contend with reverses and oppositions ; principalities and powers are armed against the kingdom of Christ, which retard its success and interfere with the equanimity of its subjects in the world.

David's oppositions sometimes arose from foreign enemies, but more frequently from internal commotions among his own subjects. For years he had to contend with the house of Saul, and when that house had been vanquished, the disagreements in his own family were a source of great trouble to him. In the present instance he was compelled to flee from his son Absalom, who had formed a conspiracy against

him, and attempted to seize his throne. God, however, who had always defended him, did not forsake him on this occasion. Absalom was slain in battle by the servants of David; the people returned to their allegiance, and contended for the precedence in carrying back the King to his house, and to his throne in Jérusalem. It appears that the men of Judah, David's own tribe, and most of whom had continued to be his faithful friends, were not so forward in urging the return of the King as were some from the other tribes of Israel who had adhered to the interests of Absalom, and were disappointed in the result. Absalom, whom they had assisted to usurp the throne was dead, his army was routed by the army of David, and all their expectations from a change in the kingdom were frustrated. Now that David was to be still King, they vied with each other in manifesting a zeal for his return. This they did doubtless to retrieve their damaged character, and to secure the restored favour of their sovereign. But David wished to be restored to his house by his own friends. He would not have them stand aloof, and be backward, whilst those of a remoter connection were forward. He sent therefore a message to them by Zadock and Abiathar the priests to invite them to their duty, pleading relationship and unity of interests. "Ye are my brethren, ye are my bones and my flesh; wherefore, then, are ye the last to bring back the King?"

That we may reduce this portion of Holy Scripture to practical use, two things may be profitably noticed. First, that Christ's reign upon earth requires personal human exertions; and secondly, that Christ expects His most intimate friends to be foremost in furthering His reign.

I. Christ's reign upon earth requires personal human exertions. David might have returned to his house without the aid of the men of Judah; but he would not stir from the place until he had secured their co-operation. Christ did not require man's help to return personally to His home in heaven, and to His throne in glory; that He did by His

own unaided Divine power; but as He returned thither in triumph He summoned angels to form His retinue, who shouted acclamations of welcome and joy as He entered into the heavenly Jerusalem: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates! even lift them up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in." To give greater effect to the expressions of welcome, the choir was divided into two sections, the one interrogating, the other responding, "Who is the King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle." In reply to the repetition of the question, they all seem to join in one harmonious chorus, "The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory." Man upon earth could not join in that chorus, neither could he take any personal part except gazing and wondering at a distance; Christ, however, merely ascended there as the representative and head of His Church: that Church is His body which He regards identical with Himself; all done for, or against the Church, He regards as done for or against Himself. "Verily, I say unto you," is His own declaration, "inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." It is thus He now calls upon us to further His reign. He has determined to bring many sons to glory, who are to make up the body of His Church, and they are to be brought together through the instrumentality of human agency. The bond of union between the members and their Head, as well as each other, is faith; so "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." "How shall they believe," asks an Apostle, "in Him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?" The gospel is to be propagated by man; churches are to be erected by man; schools are to be established and supported by man; the ignorant are to be taught by man; the feeble, the wavering, the doubtful, are to be built up by man. Thus the body of Christ is to be completed, and brought home to His house by the instrumentality of man. Thus it is to grow into a perfect man according to the measure of the stature of Christ.

Having spoken recently on this subject we shall proceed to observe—

II. That Christ expects His most intimate friends to be foremost in furthering His reign. David said to the men of Judah, “Ye are my brethren, ye are my bones and my flesh : wherefore then are ye the last to bring back the King ?” We are then to consider first, the relationship between Christ and His friends ; and, secondly, the duties arising from that relationship.

1. The relationship : “Ye are my brethren, ye are my bones and my flesh.” This David spoke because they were of the same tribe, and consequently descended from the same father. The children of the same parents have, or ought to have, a stronger interest in each other's welfare than those of a remoter connection. Christ calls God, “My Father, and your Father.” He is not ashamed to call us brethren. He owns the relationship and He rejoices in it. “For both he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified are all of one.” All of one nature, derived from one source ; all having one common parent to whom to look for support and encouragement ; all having one interest to serve, which is the perfecting of the saints to the glory of God. Now this relationship raises man in many respects to a state of equality with the Lord Jesus Christ. He has stooped to us, and we are exalted to Him. “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same.” “In all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren ; that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.” In consequence of His condescending to take our nature, we are raised to be His bones and His flesh, by virtue of which we are made heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ. Oh ! there exists a mysterious union betwixt Christ and His people, a union that exalts them to a common nature with Himself, a union which He pleads before the Father for their protection and safety. “That

they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us." "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one." Though He was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, yet He emptied Himself, taking upon Him the form of a servant, that He might be equal with and like unto us. He would be like unto us, that we might be made like unto Him; He would take our flesh, that we might receive His Spirit. He would join Himself unto us, and become one flesh with us, that we might be joined unto Him and become one Spirit with Him. When Eve was brought unto Adam after she had been taken out of him, to manifest the ground of that affection which was to be always between them, he said of her, "This is now bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh." And by this condescension of Christ, St. Paul shows that, "we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones;" whence he infers that Christ loves and nourishes His Church, as a man does his own flesh. If He, therefore, out of His inexpressible love was willing to become like unto us, whence all His troubles and sufferings arose, should not we be constrained to love Him, to live to Him, and to labour for Him in connection with whom all our honour and blessedness consist? "Ye are my brethren, ye are my bones and my flesh."

2. This peculiar relative union involves peculiar duties, so that we ought to be the foremost in furthering His interests. "Wherefore then are ye the last to bring back the King?" The other tribes contend for the honour, while you my brethren stand aloof, and are indifferent respecting the results. Shame upon Christians if they allow not only angels, but even the inhabitants of heathen lands, to manifest a stronger zeal than they. Angels, who have no personal interest in the redemption through Christ, have always been forward in administering unto Him. They came to announce His birth—they came to protect His infancy—they came to aid His human infirmity after His temptation—they came to soothe His sorrows in His sojourn through life—they came to

remove the obstacles from the way of His resurrection from the dead—they came to welcome Him back to heaven—and the result of all His work they “desire to look into.” “Wherefore are ye the last to bring back the King?” The heathen also, as far as their knowledge extended, have manifested a zeal for Christ. The wise men of the East travelled from a distant land, being guided by a star, to offer unto Him “Gold, and frankincense, and myrrh,” and the Pagan Emperor of Rome having heard of His remarkable character, wished that His statue should have a niche in the temple of his gods to be there presented for Divine worship. What have you done, brethren, to bring back the King in the circumstances of His Church? Have you gone forth as missionaries to declare His name and His glory in foreign lands? You may not be in a position to do that. Have you devoted your energies to enlighten the heathen of your own country? You may have not been able to devote the whole of your time to that. Have you build a church to fold His sheep, or schools to succour His lambs, or an asylum to relieve His feeble ones? You may not have been in a position to do that. But, have you done what you could? If you have not been able to draw His chariot, or to carry the banners of His triumph, have you tried to remove any obstacles that might have been in the way of the wheels? David did not require the men of Judah to do all, he merely asked them as his brethren to stand in the van. Angels, and heathens, and nature will aid you, but be forward in your zeal. Go to the highways and hedges and invite others to come in; encourage others by the example of your love, and faithfulness, and good living; manifest a lively interest in the advancement of your Saviour’s cause. Hurry onward His chariot wheels; be instant in season and out of season in promoting the good work. Wherefore are ye Christians the last? After so much favour shown to you—so much love bestowed upon you—so much suffering endured for you—so many mercies received by you, your zeal should urge you forward to the foremost of the ranks to bring back the King. Without this Christian

zeal there is nothing done well, there is no full consecration of self to the service of God ; there is no presenting the body a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God ; there are no bowels of mercies, and there is no rejoicing of hope. Without this Christian zeal obstacles cannot be overcome, the enemies will not be subdued, the mark will not be obtained, the prize will not be won. Without it Noah would not have built the ark ; Solomon would not have built the temple ; Christ would not have built the Church. Without it the world will never be evangelized, sin will never be conquered, holiness will never be perfected, the recompence of the reward will never be realized. Wherefore are ye the last, in the midst of so many advantages, surrounded by so many opportunities, to manifest your love and zeal for Christ's cause ? Do not let it be said, as it was said to the Jews of our Saviour's time, "The Queen of the South shall rise up in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it ; for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon ; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here."

The Seventh Sunday after Trinity.

MORNING SERVICE.—First Lesson : 2 Sam. xxi.

Verse 14.—“ *And after that God was intreated for the land.*”

God punishes for sin. Both in this world and in the world to come sin does not go unpunished. Common sins incur common punishments, but sins which are peculiar are visited with peculiar judgments. Those judgments may be for a time delayed to serve some wise Divine end, but every shaft in God's quiver shall be sooner or later strung, and will not miss to strike the proper object. We cannot see as God sees in the infliction of temporal judgments. Sometimes, as in the case recorded in this chapter, God's judgments look a great way back; they are not inflicted on the actual perpetrator of the deed, but on others who appear to us to be perfectly innocent. Thus the sin of Saul was punished in the reign of David; the people at other times were punished for the transgression of their king. God's judgments are a great deep. There is no limitation to be put to His demands. None can prescribe unto Him. He can punish when He pleases, and how He pleases, often “visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation of them that hate Him.”

We do not read in the history of Saul of the crime which is here brought against him; but it is certain that sometime or other during his reign he had cruelly murdered a portion of the Gibeonites whom his ancestors had sworn to protect. It is said that he did it “in his zeal to the children of Israel and Judah.” Then it was zeal without knowledge. Unless our zeal be tempered with wisdom, it will be productive of more harm than good. The whole circumstance affords us

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useful matter for reflection, and may be improving when compared with the moral circumstances of man in general. Our instructions may be derived, First—from the nature of the transgression; Secondly—from the requirement of the atonement; and Thirdly—from the result of satisfaction.

·I. We derive moral instruction from the nature of the transgression.

1. It was an act of infidelity. The story of the Gibeonites we find recorded in the ninth chapter of the Book of Joshua, where it is stated, that fearing the power of the Israelites they came in disguise, as men travelling from a distant country with old clothes and mouldy provisions, to beg an alliance on terms of subjection to the authority of Israel. Joshua and the elders of the people consented to the league, with the proviso that those strange people (whom they learnt in the course of three days to be their nearest neighbours), should be “hewers of wood and drawers of water unto all the congregation.” This league was religiously observed by all the judges from the days of Joshua to the days of Saul. We read of no provocation given on the part of the Gibeonites; they did not violate the conditions of the league, but continued to be hewers of wood and drawers of water. Under the name of *Nethinims* they faithfully served the congregation of the Lord without expressing a desire to deny their service, or an attempt to recover their liberty and their land. Saul on the contrary broke the covenant, and assumed to disannul the most solemn of leagues. What is sin but an act of infidelity? Our first parents were unfaithful to the conditions of the covenant which God made with them. It was the first transgression, and upon it were based all other sinful acts. St. Paul places the truce breaker on the list of the greatest criminals, and declares that such shall not inherit the kingdom of heaven.

2. Saul's transgression was an act of injustice. Whether he slew the Gibeonites (as it is supposed), with the diviners whom he destroyed, or with the priests whom he put to

death, it was equally unjust; they were not implicated with the one or the other. Or as it is here stated, that he "sought to slay them in his zeal to the children of Israel and Judah," there could have been no excuse to cover the injustice of the act. They neither rebelled against his authority, nor attempted to invade the rights of Israel and Judah; but he who could violate the demands of God, would not be scrupulous about the rights of men. The first step in the ways of sin is disobedience to God, and injustice to man will invariably follow. But—

8. Saul did not pause by doing a simple act of injustice, he also characterized it with the grossest cruelty; thus he procured for his family the stigmatizing epithet used in the first verse of this lesson, "His bloody house." It was a house stained with the blood shed by the hand of its head. Unfaithfulness and injustice will invariably lead to violence and cruelty. The man who has no regard for the sanctity of a solemn oath, has no regard for the justice of his actions; and the man who has no regard for justice, will not shrink from blood-shedding to gratify the propensity of his own heart. Cruelty is produced by selfishness, and is the worst phase of a sinful mind. It was the selfishness of Cain that instigated him to kill his brother. God had accepted the offering of the latter whilst his was rejected, therefore he became wroth, and sin—the awful sin of murder, stood at the door. It was also the selfishness of Saul that led him to slay the Gibeonites; perhaps some of those people objected to his rule when the children of Israel and Judah desired them a king in opposition to the known will of God. Saul therefore would ingratiate himself in the favour of those ungrateful people by removing out of their way those unswerving Gibeonites. To obtain his selfish ends no act of cruelty seems too great for him to perpetrate.

II. The transgression of Saul required an atonement.

This was indicated—

1. By the punishment which was inflicted. "There was a

famine in the days of David three years, year after year." The failure of the crops for the first and second years drew no special attention, as such might have happened in the ordinary course of things; but when for three successive years the earth withheld its produce, David felt that there must have been some especial cause, and consequently he inquired of the Lord. Sin cannot go unpunished. There is a penalty connected with every transgression which the justice of God binds Him to inflict. Punishment may be regarded prospective and retrospective. Prospectively, the sufferings of the future are endured for the transgressions of the past; it may be in the transgressor's own person, it may be in his family, it may be in both. For the sin of Adam, both himself and offspring were to suffer, and are suffering incalculable evils. For the sin of Ham his posterity were doomed to slavery. For the sin of Saul his children were rejected from the throne of Israel, and many of them met with premature death. We have a number of instances in which posterity suffer in consequence of the delinquencies of their ancestors. The sin of a parent contracts disease and poverty, which are transferred to the children of several generations. Retrospectively, the sufferings of the present are removed by the sufferings of the past, For what Abraham did and endured, his seed, though unworthy of themselves, were delivered from bondage, and put in possession of the land of Canaan. The line of David was continued on the throne of Judah, notwithstanding the rebellious character of many of his posterity, because of his obedience to God's laws. Far greater present and future sufferings have been averted, and far greater favours have been procured, by the past penalty inflicted on the Son of God, who "was wounded for our transgressions, and was bruised for our iniquities." If we be not punished as we deserve for our sins, it is because the punishment has been already endured by our Surety for whose sake we obtain forgiveness of sins.

2. The atonement was to be effected by an extreme

penalty. When David asked the Gibeonites, "What shall I do for you? and wherewith shall I make the atonement, that ye may bless the inheritance of the Lord?" they replied, "We will have no silver, nor gold of Saul, nor of his house." Not all the treasures possessed by that family, and perhaps not all the riches of the kingdom, could have compensated for the injustice which the Gibeonites had suffered from the hand of Saul. They demanded life for life; nothing less would have satisfied them. It was only by the sacrifice of life the injury was repaired, and the judgment removed. In like manner death is the penalty for man's transgression. Silver and gold and such corruptible things could not redeem us. "The redemption of the soul is precious;" so precious that the wealth of creation could not purchase it. The sin of which it was guilty was high treason, demanding capital punishment. Nothing less could have been accepted, nothing less could have satisfied Divine justice.

8. The atonement was demanded in the persons of the transgressor's own family, and on the ground where the offence was committed. The life of any individual offered anywhere would not have satisfied the Gibeonites. The sacrifice was prescribed, and the place was prescribed. "Let seven men of his sons be delivered unto us, and we will hang them up unto the Lord in Gibeah of Saul, whom the Lord did choose." Gibeah was the place where Saul lived, and, if the offence was committed in connexion with the tragedy of the priests, it was also done there. The sacrifice of any life would not have answered the end of atoning for man's sin; it must be the life of a representative of his family and race. There have existed but two men that could have endured the penalty in that capacity—the first Adam or the second Adam. The first Adam might have suffered the penalty, and have saved the punishment of his race; but it would have been by precluding their existence. The wisdom and love of God were to be manifested in a more glorious way. He would have the race born partaking of the sin of their first representative,

then devise a method to rescue them by the means of a second representative, who was to partake of their nature without their sin, that He might take the burden of *their* sin upon Himself; and, to enable Him to sustain it and atone for it, it was absolute that He should possess another nature, which was Divine, and capable of attaching infinite virtue to His sufferings. Thus, having joined the nature of the fallen to the nature of the eternally just and holy, He placed Himself in a position to suffer the punishment of sin in a manner to remove the curse which was suspended over the land.

III. The result of the satisfaction obtained by the death of the sons of Saul was that "God was entreated for the land;" which means, literally, that the cause of the famine which desolated the country in consequence of Saul's perfidy and cruelty was solely removed by the satisfaction received through the death of his sons. The displeasure of God, who hates sin of every description, was thus pacified. He consequently heard the intercession of David, smiled upon the people, and restored happiness and prosperity within the borders. In like manner He has declared the satisfaction which He received through the sufferings and death of the Lord Jesus Christ. In Him He was well pleased. All His attributes were glorified in what was done; love and justice, mercy and holiness, grace and truth embraced each other at the foot of the tree on which the Saviour was hanged. There they met in perfect harmony, every obstacle being removed from the way of their union. He, as it were, looked around from the cross, and spoke in the language of David, "What ye shall say, that will I do for you." The demands were presented and met; every debt was cancelled, atonement was made for every transgression, and in the words, "It is finished," sounded the key-note of reconciliation between God and man.

God was henceforth to be intreated for the land. He would hear the intercession of His Son for us, who "ever liveth to intercede for us." His mediatorial prayers are suc-

cessfully offered on our behalf, so that through Him we have free access to the Father. He will also be entreated by us. We can approach Him in reverence without fear, being encouraged to come boldly to a "throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

None now need be discouraged, for God, having received satisfaction, declares, "Though our sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." The wicked may therefore "forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." The invitations of the Gospel are replete with encouragement. Sinner, do not despair; come as thou art, with a penitent heart, and He will receive thee.

The Seventy Sunday after Trinity.

EVENING SERVICE.—Second Lesson: 2 Thess. ii.

Verse 8.—“ *And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.*”

SINCE the religion of innocence ceased, truth has never existed in the world without error. Though truth be older than error, yet error is not much younger than truth. Anti-christianism is almost as old as Christianity. The mystery of iniquity soon appeared after the revelation of the mystery of godliness. The Thessalonians were soon shaken in their profession of the truth by the introduction of error. That error manifested itself in a wrong notion of the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, which some had evidently imposed upon them as being just at hand, thus troubling and unsettling them in the doctrines which they had been taught. St. Paul labours to enlighten them on the subject, telling them that, though the coming of Christ was a fact to be believed as an encouragement to fidelity and perseverance, yet the time of His coming had not been revealed; therefore he would not have them unfit themselves for the vocations of life, which such a notion would conduce, nor subject Christianity to disrepute, which would be the consequence of a disappointed expectation. Then he produces an argument which was to him, and would be to them, a convincing proof that the second coming was not near at hand. “Let no man deceive you, for that day shall not come except there be a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition.” The reference was to some general apostacy or defection of the visible Church from the faith of Christianity

as then existing. The question arises—to what did the Apostle refer? It was to something future, and something that would not occur for a considerable time. The spirit, it is true, was already invoked. Satan watched his earliest opportunity to introduce the leaven into the meal; but there was a preventive force to check the progress. What was to appear he calls “that man of sin, the son of perdition.” By the “man of sin” is to be understood no one particular person, but a succession of persons possessing the same spirit and claiming the same power. The man of sin is also the “son of perdition,” first destroying others, and lastly being destroyed himself. The man of sin and the son of perdition is in the text called that “*Wicked*” or, as the original word may be translated that *lawless one*, which is a most appropriate epithet. There has arisen no person, nor succession of persons, in the Christian Church, from the time of the Apostle to the present, unto whom the language employed here can be applied but one. That the reference is made to the apostate Church of Rome there can exist no doubt, for all the characteristics of that apostacy literally correspond with the picture drawn here by St. Paul. It is a true photograph of the Papacy, and in holding it up for your inspection we shall notice first, its rise; secondly, its character; and thirdly, its end.

I. The rise of the Papacy as described here by St. Paul.

1. We find that it originated in a gradual degeneracy from the true faith of the gospel. “For that day shall not come except there be a falling away first.” Even in the days of the Apostles the falling off commenced; errors crept in, and the simplicity of Christ crucified was substituted by the introduction of doctrines and customs which dimmed the lustre of the pure gold. The Apostle John lived to see heresy becoming rampant, and many who had been instructed in the doctrines and discipline of the Apostles resorted to traditions and fables which soon afterwards rent asunder the peace and prosperity of the Church. The “mystery of iniquity” did

already work, and only waited an opportunity to manifest itself in the virulence of its destructive dispositions. Heathen persecutions tended to keep together for a time the flock of Christ, and to check the spread of antichristian principles among themselves; but as soon as those persecutions were relaxed, internal degeneracy increased, and a desire for supremacy and power divided those who should be one into contending sections. Early did the Bishop of Rome claim a superior position, chiefly on account of his being the bishop of that city which held authority at the time over the rest of the civilized world. Then—

2. The Apostle mentions a great obstacle on the way of the man of sin—being at once revealed. “And now ye know what withholdeth.” “Only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.” The power which obstructed the immediate appearance of Antichrist is not named. The Thessalonians knew to whom he alluded; a consideration of policy probably was the reason why the name is not mentioned here. The word translated *letteth* means to *possess* or *occupy*. Some one was in possession of something which was an obstacle on the way of Antichrist, to be revealed as it would be at some future period. This impediment is generally understood to be the Roman empire. The man of sin could not rise to his greatness so long as that empire stood in its grandeur. The seat could not be filled by two imperial powers at once; while the Roman Empire possessed Rome the seat was occupied, and, till it became vacant, it could not be the seat of Antichrist. Why did not the Apostle name the power which withheld? It was that he might not incense the Roman emperors against the Christians, which he must have done had he said openly, “Antichrist shall not come until the Roman empire be destroyed.” But that which then “let” was to be taken out of the way, not at once, but gradually, as the sequel proves. There was an inward decay, and then an outward pressure to accomplish the end.

The prophet Daniel spoke of four great empires, the last

of which should be strong as iron and unbounded in its limits, "forasmuch," he says, "as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things." Yet this dominion should be parted into ten kingdoms, various in extent, and unequal in dignity. As it was said, so it has been. The ten kingdoms are described as ten horns, and from amongst them a remarkable horn was to arise which should subdue and absorb three of those horns into its own realm. This horn is distinguished from the rest by its more exalted and spiritual character. Though proceeding from a beast, it had eyes like a man, and a mouth speaking great things. "And," says the Jewish seer, "he shall speak great words against the Most High, and wear out the saints of the Most High, and think to change times and laws, and they shall be given into his hand, until a time and times, and the dividing of times."

We shall proceed to remark—

II. The character of that *Wicked* to be revealed.

1. He is called "that man of sin, the son of perdition," which shows the corrupt nature of the system to which he refers. Every man is a sinner addicted to sin, and committing sin, but this man is distinguished from all others by being called *that man of sin*, produced by the sin, and supported by the sin of his adherents. Humanity must blush at the sin of the Church which is emphatically called the "mother of harlots." Where will you find such records of blasphemy, of incest, of adulteries, of sorceries, of murders, of treasons, which have not only been committed, but countenanced; not only acted, but authorized and enforced by that iniquitous system? By the sale of indulgences and commercial forgiveness, sin of every shade has been encouraged; whilst those at the head of the system have been guilty of the blackest crimes that have ever stained the pages of history.

2. We have here, next, the enmity and opposition of that man of sin: "Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped." He opposeth

himself against Christ, as his name, Antichrist, signifies; opposing Him in His doctrine, in His offices, and in His members, inasmuch as he has corrupted His doctrine, debased His offices, and persecuted His members. He "exalteth himself above all that is called God." Emperors, kings, princes, magistrates are called gods by virtue of their offices, above all of whom he exalts himself, claiming to himself supreme authority. The Pope has deposed kings, has interdicted their kingdoms, has absolved their subjects from loyalty, has given their kingdoms to others, has made them kiss his feet, has placed them under his table while he was eating, has compelled them to hold his stirrup when mounting his horse, and has cast upon them all kinds of indignity, even placing his foot upon their necks. Angels are called *gods*; the man of sin exalts himself above them, commanding them to take souls out of purgatory, and carry them into Abraham's bosom at his will. The Pagan nations had objects of adoration which they called *gods*; he exalts himself above those, for the heathen limited the power of their deities, attributing the government of heaven to Jupiter, of hell to Pluto, of the sea to Neptune, and so on; but he asserts that his power extends over heaven, earth, and hell, all of which are under his dominion as the vicegerent of God. He is that *Wicked*, lawless one, bidding defiance to the laws of God and man.

3. We have also his arrogant presumption. "So that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God." By "the temple of God" we understand the Church of God, the external Church of Christ, where the pope sits as supreme officer and bishop, assuming the authority of God upon earth, claiming the same power that Christ exercises over the Church, namely, an universal supremacy—an absolute authority—and an unerring infallibility. He usurps the title of "chief God upon earth." From his decision it is affirmed that no appeal is to be made even to God Himself. He takes upon himself to prohibit what God has commanded, and to command what God has prohibited. He assumes authority over the consciences of men, compel-

ling them to believe whatever he suggests, and do whatever he commands. He is the court of appeal where every dispute is to be finally settled. He changes sacraments ordained by Christ—forms decrees contrary to Scripture—and compels all within his power to rely upon his infallibility, trying to persuade the world that the keys of heaven and hell are suspended from his girdle.

4. We have his vile pretensions to deceive the world: "Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan; with all power and signs and lying wonders." Reference is here made to the power of working miracles fictitiously claimed by the Church of Rome. True miracles are either a suspension or a counteraction of the laws of nature; all the miracles of the Bible partake of either of these two characters. But the popish miracles are neither the one nor the other, but a miserable imitation of necromancy got up by a limited knowledge of scientific principles for the purpose of imposing upon the ignorant and credulous. They are "lying wonders," performed "with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish." Our Saviour referred to this class of teachers when He warned His disciples against false Christs, and false prophets. For, He says, "there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." Of no other sect of false prophets do we read of the same extensive attempts at "lying wonders," as we find in the Romish Church. The system being a system of falsehoods must be supported by lying powers, lying signs, lying wonders. The greatest of the pretended miracles are fables, forgeries, impostures, diabolical illusions. What cannot be proved by the oracles of God, is propped up by the miracles of Satan. But—

III. We have the end of that "Wicked," that lawless one, "whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming." He shall be first gradually consumed by "the spirit of his

mouth," and shall be finally destroyed by "the brightness of his coming."

1. He shall be gradually "consumed with the spirit of His mouth;" or with the breath of His mouth. It will be a no more difficult task for God to destroy Antichrist than any other of His enemies. He has only to breathe upon him and he is consumed. But He will not consume him at once; as the enemies of the Israelites in Canaan were to be driven out by little and little, so shall Antichrist be driven out. God has His purposes to fulfil. By this man of sin His true people are to be proved—to be scourged—to be purified. The result of the Reformation shows this, and if we can read the signs of the times correctly, if we can properly discern the directions of the clouds which from time to time arise in the horizon of the Church, the saints of the most High are yet to endure a repetition of the same trials from "that wicked." Still whilst God's breath is upon him he shall not escape.

He is to be consumed gradually, but effectually. The process may be by first dispossessing him of his civil power, and then of his ecclesiastical authority. Those who have traced the footsteps of his history may see how his dominion has been already curtailed. In England we hope his civil power is destroyed for ever. In many countries on the Continent of Europe his throne is perceptibly crumbling to pieces, whilst in the Papal states themselves he has long been supported by a foreign force. God by His Providence is working the consummation of the apostle's prediction, "whom the Lord will consume with the spirit of his mouth."

The most effectual means, however, by which Antichrist shall be consumed, is the pure spirit of the Gospel, which since the days of Martin Luther has been a spirit of burning around the throne of the "wicked" one, consuming the error of his system. The light of truth is chasing away the darkness of falsehood. The sword of the Spirit is severing asunder the ties of superstition. The power of God's word is nullifying the power of a pretending priesthood. The

wonders of Divine grace are destroying the "lying wonders" of "the working of Satan."

2. He shall be finally destroyed with the brightness of the coming of Christ. This may mean His coming in the full power of the Gospel, at the dawn of the millennial day upon the earth, when His judgments shall be poured forth on the son of perdition, and on his adherents—when He shall establish a kingdom of truth, of righteousness, of peace, in the world,—when the brightness of the pure doctrines of the Bible shall dim into obscurity the superstitious teachings of the Mass—and when all ignorance and error shall be buried in the tomb of endless oblivion.

If not then, there will be the brightness of Christ's coming to judgment, when all wickedness shall be revealed, and all wicked ones shall be destroyed. Then, at least, the final ruin and utter destruction of Antichrist shall be consummated. Just at the close of his vision in the Isle of Patmos, the beloved disciple saw all the misery that should befall the city of the "seven mountains," figuratively called "the great Babylon;" and it was said of her, "Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine, and she shall be utterly burned with fire; for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her."

Whether this total ruin of the "Wicked" shall take place during the promised universal success of the gospel, or whether it is to be delayed until the day of judgment, we should be content to wait for it, since infinite wisdom determines the time as well as the thing itself. In the meanwhile let us avoid all things that might encourage the abominations of the man of sin, and employ all means to accomplish his destruction.

The Eighth Sunday after Trinity.

MORNING SERVICE.—Second Lesson : John x.

Verse 10.—“ *I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.*”

WERE I to ask what life is, perhaps all may not give the same definition of it. But all will agree that it is a thing inestimably valuable, the dearest thing which they possess, and the last thing with which they are willing to part. The father of lies once told an undeniable truth, “All that a man hath will he give for his life.” When the unfortunate traveller meets with a highwayman who demands his purse or his life, he gladly resigns the former, however valuable, if thereby he can save the latter. But what is this life on which we place so high an estimate, which we succour with so great a care, and for which we regard no sacrifice too great to make? What is it in its enjoyments and pleasures? Jacob says, “Few and evil are the days of the years of my pilgrimage.” Job says that, “man who is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble.” Solomon, whose cup overflowed with all the luxuries and happiness which this world could afford, concludes that “all is vanity and vexation of spirit.” What is life in its duration? “It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanishes away.” Life is the consciousness of existence and the powers of acting; but so short—so uncertain—so full of trials is our existence here, that it is scarcely worthy of the name of *life*.

In the text, our Saviour speaks of a life which is totally different from, and infinitely superior to, the most valuable and most satisfactory of all human lives. A life which is in its nature spiritual, and in its duration eternal—a life which consists not only in immortal existence, but also in incon-

ceivable happiness—a life which has *grace* for its germ and operation here, and *glory* for its consummation hereafter. “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.” This implies that by nature man has no life. The description given of the moral state of the world is, that it is dead in trespasses and sins. This is the natural consequence of the first fall. When God had formed Adam and placed him in his paradisaical inheritance, He set before him the way of life and the way of death. By observing certain conditions, he should enjoy the full scope of all that was pleasing—all that was lovely—all that was beautiful—all that was conducive to a life of peace and happiness; but, if he neglected those conditions inevitable death was to be the result. “For in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” The conditions were violated, therefore misery and death flowed in as an irresistible current and overwhelmed all the race. There was consequently but one way by which the evil could be counteracted, that was by God’s own Son assuming the nature of the fallen, and in that nature to suffer all the penalties and curses incurred by man’s transgression. This He did when He came into the world, and thereby the transgressor is restored into favour, and his life secured on a firmer basis than it was even before the fall. “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”

The text teaches us, first, the object for which Christ came into the world; and, secondly, the superabounding excellency of the result of that object.

I. The object for which Christ came into the world. “I am come that they might have life.” It was different from all others. Sin entered to render the world miserable, the law entered to discover that misery, Christ entered to remove it.

1. He came to procure life. This none else could have effected. Men could not have done it, angels could not have done it. St. Paul declares that the law could not do it,

"in that it was weak through the flesh," and what the law could not do, no other system could effect. If philosophy could enlarge the intellect and enlighten the mind, it could not cause its votaries to taste of mercy. If physic could suggest remedies for the natural maladies of mankind, it could not improve the moral health of the patients. If science could discover the dimensions of a star and the distance of a planet; if, provided a fulcrum could have been procured, it could move the globe; it could not discover a lever sufficiently powerful to raise the spiritual condition of the human race. Neither is there salvation in any other "but in Christ, for there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved." This He came to the world to accomplish: "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." When He gave His own life a ransom for sin, He insured the spiritual and eternal life of all that would believe in His name. He came to render life in the present world more supportable and happy. When He healed the sick, when He gave sight to the blind, when He strengthened the limbs of the lame, when He made the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak, when He relieved those who were tormented by evil spirits, and restored the dead to life, He alleviated the evils which pressed so heavily upon the minds of thousands. We have instances of this in the case of the Syro-phenician woman, whose prayer of faith was heard in behalf of her daughter—of Jairus whose child was raised when actually dying—of the widow of Nain whose son was restored to her arms from the bier—of the little family of Bethany where Lazarus was brought again into life after being dead four days, and many others that might be mentioned; but though He dropped an ingredient of joy into the cup of sorrow of those individuals, He did not secure to them the duration of their lives. That He accomplished only when He laid down His own life upon the cross, in that act of love and self-devotion He procured eternal life to all His followers, for "Whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life."

2. He came to reveal the way of life. "Life and immortality are brought to light through the gospel." Never was the way of life declared so fully and plainly as in the ministry of our Saviour. God had revealed the way of life to the patriarchs, and more fully explained it through the prophets; but their knowledge of it was limited and cramped in comparison to the light thrown upon it by the incarnation and sufferings of Christ. When He declared "I am the way, the truth, and the life, and no one cometh to the Father but through me," the disciples had a practical demonstration of it before their eyes. The nature of this life He declared to be spiritual, not a mere alleviation of the sorrows of the present life, but a "well of water springing up into everlasting life." He revealed the original cause of life, which was the love of God. He revealed the meritorious cause, which was His own death. "He died the just for the unjust, that we might be brought unto God." "He was made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." "Through his stripes we are healed." "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." Justly did Peter ask, "Unto whom shall we go but unto thee? thou hast the words of eternal life." He revealed the conditions of life, which was the exercise of faith in God through Him. "Whosoever believeth on him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." When the trembling father besought Him with tears to have compassion upon his afflicted child—"If thou canst believe," was His reply. "All things are possible to him that believeth." In answer to the objections of the Jews near the pool of Bethesda, He said, "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." Here we have, brethren, the great principles through which we are to be reconciled to God. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Here we have the great doctrine of the Reformation—justification by faith. "He that believeth shall not come to

condemnation, but he that believeth not is condemned already."

3. He came that a principle of life might be implanted in our souls. The Son quickeneth whom He will. This He does through the agency of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit takes of the things of Christ and reveals them unto us. He is therefore called the Spirit of Christ; the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus making us free from the law of sin and death. As Lazarus lived from the moment Christ uttered His voice, saying, "Lazarus come forth," so sinners hearing the quickening voice of Christ in the Gospel, commence a new and spiritual life which shall never cease, but shall issue in eternal life. What is religion? It is something more than a form of sound words—it is more than a scriptural mode of worship and discipline—it is more than a decent course of respectable morals; it is *life*, a *new, spiritual life*, the life of God infused into the soul of man—a spark, as it were, of the Divine nature—a birth derived from the Spirit of Christ. There is thus a new principle implanted in the mind, a principle of emotion, of perception, of enjoyment. Something that is active and permanent in its nature. It is beautifully described by our Lord in His conversation with the woman of Samaria. "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again; but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." Here is the abiding active principle which we call *life*, and in which there is a gradual progression, first the blade, and then the stalk, then the ear, and then the corn full in the ear; first the babe, then the youth, then the man, and then the father in Christ.

Let us observe—

II. The superabounding excellency of the life procured by Christ; "and that they might have it *more abundantly*." To deliver from hell would have been life, but He has done more, He has given a claim to heaven. To liberate the prisoner

from the dungeon is life, but to advance him to a palace and a throne is life *more abundantly*.

More abundantly—

1. Than the life which Adam enjoyed before the fall. It is placed on a firmer foundation; that depended on the sandy foundation of man's obedience; this on the firm rock of Christ's atonement. That was entrusted to the conditions of a covenant, of which finite and feeble men formed one party; this is established by a covenant taken solely into the charge of infinite wisdom and power. Our representative in that life was of the earth earthy; our representative here is the Lord from heaven. In the first Adam, we bore the image of the earthy; in the second Adam, we bare the image of the heavenly. Had Adam continued in his innocency, it would have been necessary that he should undergo some material change (though not death) in order that he might enjoy a heavenly paradise, for "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." Here there is no change, but an eternal expansion of the same principle in glory. Adam's paradise, however beautiful and glorious, was not to be compared to the paradise which awaits the poorest of God's people. Man's creation was glorious, but his redemption exceeds in glory. The righteousness of even a perfect creature is infinitely beneath the righteousness of an eternal God.

More abundantly—

2. Than it was revealed in the Jewish Church. The saints under the Mosaic economy obtained life from the same source as ourselves; but we have it more abundantly in respect to knowledge, freedom, and enjoyment. Our Lord declared to His disciples, "Verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see these things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them." They had the shadow, we have the substance; they had the type, we have the antitype; they saw the Messiah and the glories of His kingdom, through a veil darkly, "but we all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the

same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord ;" they had the dawn, we have the sun risen from on high : they received the Spirit of bondage which causeth fear, we the Spirit of adoption, by which we cry Abba, Father ; they had not liberty to enter into the holy of holies but once in the year, and then the privilege was confined to the high priest, but we can enter into the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus through a new and living way ; they came to the " mountain that might be touched, and that burned with fire, and unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest ; and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words ; which voice they that heard entreated that the words should not be spoken to them any more." " But we are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and Church of the firstborn which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel."

3. That they might have life more abundantly than they at first possess it. Religion is progressive in the soul of the Christian. He goes from strength to strength, and is renewed day by day. For " the path of the righteous shines brighter and brighter unto the perfect day." There is life in the seed, but more abundantly in the tree. There is life in the blade, but more abundantly in the full ear. There is life in the infant, but more abundantly in the man. There is life in the soul when it is regenerated by the Holy Ghost, but more abundantly when arriving in the " unity of faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

How wonderful, brethren, is the condescension of Christ, that He should come unto the world to die, that we dead sinners might live ! To us, even to us is the word of this salvation sent. Oh ! what importance does this give to the preaching of the Gospel, to the reading of the Scriptures,

and to all divine ordinances. Are we possessed of this life? If we are, it is a life of comfort to which we are called, for being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. There is a satisfaction and a pleasure here to which all but the Christian are strangers. Believers delight in God's word, in God's ways, in God's people, in God's service. They find a day in His courts better than a thousand, and they had rather be doorkeepers in the house of God, than dwell in the tents of wickedness. "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."

The Eighth Sunday after Trinity.

EVENING SERVICE.—First Lesson : 1 Kings xvii.

Verse 16.—“ *And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by Elijah.*”

God seems to have had His special favourites amongst men in the world, nearly in every age until the advent of our Saviour. To them He declared His will and revealed His designs. Before the deluge Enoch and Noah were His favourites. Between the deluge and the giving of the law, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph were His favourites. Then Moses at the institution of the Jewish economy, and under that economy they became more frequent as the exigencies of the times required. We have amongst them some kings, some priests, and a great number of prophets. Those favourites, as far as we know, were not naturally possessed of superior virtues and powers more than other men : but God endowed them with special qualities, because He wanted them for special purposes, at special times. Elijah was one of those special favourites, and his history commences so abruptly in this chapter as if he had been an angel come down from heaven. Some indeed have considered him to be an angel, as nothing whatever is known of his tribe and parentage. But that he was not an angel we are assured by the apostle James, who tells us that “ *Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are.*” Perhaps he was a man of stronger passions than most men, as his peculiar circumstances required that he should be of a determined will, and unflinching boldness. God had marked him out for a great work, which was the reformation of Israel. It was a

rough service that needed a rough spirit to perform. Just as the reformation from Popery needed such a man as Martin Luther to break the ice, so did the reformation in Israel. Elijah was the very man to meet the circumstances of the times in which he lived. Never was a king so bold to sin as Ahab, never was a prophet so bold to reprove as Elijah. His story is full of the most remarkable circumstances. He lived, he acted, and no part of the Old Testament history shines brighter than this of "the spirit and power of Elias." His mission seems to have been exclusively to the king of Israel. Ahab "did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him," therefore he required a stronger hand to curb his propensities, and a stronger messenger to warn and to threaten him than any of his predecessors. Such a one was Elijah, whose story begins and continues with a series of remarkable miracles sufficient to terrify into submission any other man than Ahab who had sold himself to work evil. For the wickedness of this king and his wife Jezebel God punished the country with a famine consequent upon a drought of three years and a half duration, of which Elijah warns Ahab in the commencement of this chapter. During the whole of this time the prophet was miraculously supported, first by ravens at the brook Cherith, and then by a poor widow woman at Zarephath of Zidon. When Elijah came to her in obedience to the instructions which he had received from God, she was in the act of collecting fuel to cook her last meal she had in prospect for herself and child before death. Elijah asking her to supply him with a "morsel of bread," she said, "As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse; and behold I am gathering two sticks that I may go and cook it for me and my son, that we may eat it and die." Upon this the prophet assured her that if she attended to his request her barrel and cruse should be inexhaustible as long as the necessity called for the supply. In the sequel we find that after he, and she, and her house had eaten many days, "the barrel of meal had wasted not,

neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord which he spake by Elijah."

This circumstance furnishes us with three useful subjects for consideration. First—the force of prayer; Secondly—the exercise of faith; and Thirdly—the goodness of God.

I. We have here the force of prayer. Elijah tells Ahab, "There shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word." That *word*, St. James informs us, was prayer. "Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain; and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months; and he prayed again and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit." Elijah was a man of prayer, and "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." Jacob prayed and conquered with God. He not only obtained the blessing which he solicited, but also a change of name that conferred upon him a knighthood of heaven which should redound to his praise to the end of time. Having power with God, he had also power with man. His brother Esau's wrath was turned into love, his frowns transferred into smiles. He obtained a princely name, and a princely gift. Those are Israelites indeed who are mighty in prayer. They obtain *what* they desire and more than they *can* desire. Solomon prayed for wisdom to judge Israel, God's people. He gave him what he asked, and in addition gave him riches unequalled in the annals of the world. David was enlarged by prayer. Hezekiah's days were lengthened fifteen years, and Daniel obtained both protection in the lions' den and a more honourable position in the kingdom of Persia. The fervent prayer of faith never fails. To disbelieve this, would be to disbelieve the word of a God who never lied. If you believe the promise of Christ on his oath, you must believe that earnest prayer always prevails. To encourage His disciples He declared, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye ask the Father in my name he will give it you." And again, "Verily I say unto

you, If ye have faith and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done. And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." May I not appeal to the experience of God's people present? Can you point to any instance in your lives, that when you prayed earnestly for strength to sustain sorrow, to perform a religious duty, or to withstand a temptation, it was denied you? And even when you have thus prayed for temporal mercies or deliverances, have they not been obtained where God saw that they would be for your benefit? Perhaps they may not have come at once according to your wishes; they may have been delayed as in the case of Abraham to prove your faith, but they have been granted in God's time and manner; and in those cases when you have not realized your desires, you have since seen, or shall hereafter see, that if they had been granted, they would have been for your harm and not for your benefit. We find in this instance that God went out of His ordinary course to answer the prayer of Elijah by closing the heavens, and reopening them at his request. We have no right to expect miracles in answer to prayer, but we have a right to expect that every promise of God shall be fulfilled.

II. We have here the exercise of faith.

1. There was a trial of Elijah's faith in trusting solely upon the miraculous interposition of Providence for support. There are two instances given in this chapter of Elijah's reposing confidence in God. First, when he was commanded to hide himself by the brook Cherith, with the prospect of being fed by ravens. In regarding this portion of God's care over Elijah, we would not multiply miracles by adopting the notion that the ravens which fed Elijah were those birds of prey called by that name. To compel a bird of prey contrary to its nature to procure clean food, and then to give it up to man, is not a thing impossible with God; but it is not His custom to multiply miracles to accomplish one simple end,

which must have been done under such circumstances. The original word (*orebim*) which is here translated ravens might, according to many learned authors, both ancient and modern, be rendered *merchants* or persons trading from one place to another. They might have been Arabians, as colonies of those people were widely scattered over different places for the purpose of temporal trade. God might have directed those people by inspiration to supply the prophet with food, and to get a constant supply from such hands in that extraordinary way was sufficient miracle to show the superintendence of God, as well as His government over the hearts of all men. Besides, there was a town near the spot called *Orbo*, and the inhabitants called *Orbim*, and St. Jerome with some others think, that those people were moved by the Spirit of the Lord to furnish the supplies which Elijah required. In either case the faith of the prophet was exercised as he had to live from day to day by simple trust in the miraculous interposition of Divine Providence. But greater still was the faith of the woman, who, in her extreme poverty, readily obeyed the simple command of the stranger. Elijah had received the Divine assurance of support by extraordinary revelation; the poor woman knew neither the true God, nor the purport of His revelations. She was an idolatress, living amongst idolaters of the worst kind. Zidon was the seat of the worship of Baal, whence it had been recently transmitted by Jezebel into Israel. Still this woman exercised unprecedented faith in the prophet's word. She might have raised the most forcible objections, arguing that this man was a perfect stranger of whom she knew nothing; moreover he was an Israelite of whose nation the Zidonians did not entertain the most favourable opinions. The circumstances of the case might have afforded another argument; at another time, she might out of her little have given some limited relief to a stranger, but now she was reduced to the last extremity, her only child was on the brink of starvation, she had only just sufficient meal and oil to make the last cake before death should overtake both herself and boy.

But, no, she does not resort to such arguments, but turned to obey without further questioning, believing the declaration of the prophet, "The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail." It might be said of her as it was afterwards said of another of the same country, "O woman, great is thy faith!" it had not been so seen, "no, not in Israel." She supplied the prophet's wants first, trusting to his word for the supply of her own and son's. It was as much a miracle of grace to increase this poor ignorant woman's faith, as it was a miracle of Providence to increase the meal in the barrel, and the oil in the cruse. Her example is worthy of imitation. Our advantages to exercise faith in God are greater than hers. She had not previously professed to serve God, and probably knew but little of Him; but we have "line upon line, and precept upon precept." He has given us an assurance that our bread shall be given us, and that our water is sure; and besides this He has given us great and precious promises of the support of His grace and eternal life in His Son. Though the prospect may be sometimes rather gloomy, yet happy are they who can thus hope against hope, believe and obey in hope.

III. We have the goodness of God displayed throughout the whole circumstance. He took care of His prophet in the midst of the surrounding want and destitution, and He took care of the trusting widow for her act of faith and obedience. It was out of compassion He sent His servant to her. He was not sent to beg from her, but to board with her, and God paid well for his entertainment in supplying her household's wants throughout the whole period of the famine. "And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord which he spake by Elijah." Our Saviour takes notice of this as an early indication of God's favour designed for the poor Gentiles in the fulness of time. "But I tell you of a truth, that many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great

famine was throughout all the land. But unto none of them was Elias sent save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow." Many were in Israel, some of whom doubtless would have welcomed him to their houses, but he was sent to a city of Zidon to honour with his presence and help a Gentile family.

This is an instance of the unrestricted character of God's goodness. The Israelite might have then boasted of the peculiar favours bestowed upon him, and would have been constantly and permanently bestowed did he not sin them away; but God's providential care was even then exercised over the Gentile as well as over the Israelite. He left not Himself without witness amongst the Gentiles, in that He did good, and gave them rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness. His favours to the Gentiles are now extended beyond the provisions of Providence. He thus still furnishes us with supplies for every want, not perhaps by extraordinary interpositions as in the case before us, but by regularly opening His treasure-house, and supplying us with daily bread, with daily deliverances, with daily health, with daily strength, with daily comforts; and those daily provisions (although they appear to us common because they come regularly) are as much acts of Divine goodness as keeping up a constant supply in the widow's barrel and cruse. These, however, are not the limits of God's goodness towards us. He performs miracles of grace in converting our souls, in giving us of His Spirit, and supplying our spiritual wants from the fulness of the riches treasured up in Christ. Having spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, with Him also He freely gives us all things. Then whilst we acknowledge Him and trust Him for the favours of His providence, let us pray for a constant supply of the treasures of His grace, that we may be now made wise unto salvation, and be hereafter exalted to His eternal glory.

The Ninth Sunday after Trinity.

MORNING SERVICE.—First Lesson: 1 Kings xviii.

Verse 38, 39.—“ *Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifices, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when the people saw it they fell on their faces: and they said, The Lord, he is the God; The Lord, he is the God.*”

WE have already seen that Elijah lodged with the widow of Zarephath during the famine, caused by the drought in Canaan, where, it is probable, he remained for the space of three years. There is a remarkable fact connected with this worthy of notice, which is, that the country whence the idolatrous worship of Baal was exported into Israel, should conceal and nourish the instrument intended to undermine its existence in Israel, even during the persecution instituted by Ahab and Jezebel in its favour. This, however, was consistent with God's usual mode of operation. He frequently turns the point of the enemy's weapon against himself, and the means intended by others to frustrate His designs are made the instruments to further His purposes.

The Almighty took a vast amount of trouble to convince Ahab and the Israelites of the great evil of their idolatry. In addition to ordinary judgments which they might have construed to be the result of natural causes, He condescends to work a series of remarkable miracles to declare his utter abhorrence of their abominable practices. In connection with, and by His servant Elijah He had already displayed the power of His interposing Providence in punishing His enemies and protecting his friends; and now the crowning miracle is per-

formed to prove openly in the presence of the prophets and worshippers of Baal, that He only was God, and should alone receive divine honours.

The history of the trial is peculiarly interesting. We find that by the command of Elijah, the King of Israel, the prophets of Baal, and a great concourse of people were assembled on Mount Carmel, where existed the ruins of an ancient altar of the Lord, which is supposed to have been erected in the time of the Judges. Being assembled Elijah ordered that two bullocks should be sacrificed, the one for himself the other for the false prophets. These bullocks were to be cut in pieces, and laid upon an altar of wood, with no fire under. This being done, they were to pray to their respective gods; and that god who should answer by sending fire to consume the sacrifice was henceforth to be the object of the people's adoration. That every facility might be given to the worshippers of Baal, they were to have the first trial. Having arranged their offering, they presented their petitions, "and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us." But no celestial fire came, Baal continued indifferent to their prayers, though they "leaped upon the altar," or danced around the altar in the manner of heathen worshippers, and cut themselves with knives and lancets, mingling their own blood with that of the sacrifice, whilst the true prophet jeered and derided them; still there was no pity, no reply came to the earnest requests. "There was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded." When every hope was at an end, and the time of offering the evening sacrifice had arrived, Elijah challenged the people to come unto him. Having repaired the altar of Jehovah,—not an altar merely of wood which was inflammable, but he added twelve stones, "according to the number of the tribes of Jacob." As if that were not sufficient he made a trench about the altar, and commanded water to be poured over the whole until the trench was full to the brim. This being done, he arranged his sacrifice, and prayed with his usual fervency, which God immediately answered to

the conviction of all the eye-witnesses. Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt-offering, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench."

From this remarkable fact we shall now draw some practical inferences which may be useful to ourselves.

1. The first remark we shall make is, that *Elijah alone*, accompanied by his God, was superior to the combined forces of all the false prophets, even backed by the presence and the countenance of their king. Although there were seven thousand in Israel who had not bowed their knees to Baal, yet, certainly, on Mount Carmel he could confidently say, "I, even I, only remain a prophet of the Lord." The false prophets were armed with all their insinuating powers, the king, with his idolatrous heart, was abetting them to his utmost, whilst all the people (if not fully prejudiced) were at the least halting between two opinions. Elijah, with his lion heart, stood a single champion for the truth, and resolutely challenged the whole to the combat, knowing that God, faithful to His promise, would vindicate the right and display His power to the confusion of His enemies. What an instance of steadfast confidence and unwavering fidelity! Are we not reminded here of another far superior Hero who, single-handed, entered the list not only against a few hundred or thousand idolaters, but against all the principalities and powers of earth and hell, treading "the winepress alone, and of the people there was none with Him?" Here in His own person He defied all the powers of darkness, and conquered even death itself within its own territories. Are we not also reminded that if God be for us, who can be against us? The feeblest saint will win the day when clad in His armour and going forth in His strength. With His strength Noah could withstand the jeers of the violent antediluvians, Abraham could be faithful among a faithless generation, Lot could be righteous among the wicked Sodomites, Moses could withstand the infidel Egyptian monarch, Samson could slay a thousand men with the jawbone of an ass, the stripling David could subdue

the Giant of Gath, Daniel could defy a Persian Court, and the few fishermen of Galilee could "turn the world upside down." We need not fear any foe whilst we have God for our support.

2. This grand appearance of Jehovah was manifested at His altar. That altar had been long neglected, deserted, and lying in ruins; hence the ignorance and superstition of the country. But when it was repaired by Elijah, God soon displayed His presence, as known in distinction from all idols, until even the halting Israelites were compelled to cry out, "The Lord, he is the God; the Lord, he is the God." Let me direct you to the Altar of Calvary, the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. In the grand display which was there made of the fire of Divine justice, consuming the great offering that was laid upon the altar, many a guilty sinner has been led to cry out, as the Israelites at Elijah's offering, "The Lord, he is the God." When that centurion who stood over against the cross exclaimed, "Truly this man was the Son of God," it was but a confession of the truth displayed through Elijah, and a prediction of the conviction of all that by faith can look upon the burning of that sacrifice. "The Lord, he is the God," in whom can we trust but in Him? whom shall we worship and adore but Him? who is able to hear, to answer, to save but He? It was the sight of the sacrifice burning upon this altar, that at a later period, through the preaching of Philip, caused joy in that city of Samaria in which Ahab lived; the same caused the Ethiopian Eunuch to go on his way rejoicing; the same caused the violent persecutor of Tarsus to be a vessel of mercy; and has caused thousands to flee for refuge, laying hold on the hope set before them.

3. The fire came down from heaven. It was not a production of earth. It was Divine in its origin, Divine in its power, a celestial flame that nothing could resist. Every good and perfect gift cometh from above, from God who is the Father of lights; He is the Author of the fire which is kindled on the altar of every Christian heart, consuming its corruptions, and giving evidences of renewed

vitality which will acknowledge the Lord only to be God. Religion is heaven born, it comes from above, and when it descends into the heart it transmutes the whole of man into its own nature. Christ descended from above, the Holy Spirit descends from above ; faith, and hope, and love, accompanied by all other graces, descend from above ; they are the operation of a fire, which wealth cannot purchase, which art cannot invent, which science cannot produce, which worldly wisdom cannot bestow, which all the learning of the world cannot furnish. " If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him."

4. The fire of the Lord was perfect in its operation. " It consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench." The sacrifice first, and the other materials afterwards. Different from elemental fire, which tends upwards in its operation, this fire worked downwards, beginning with the chief object and ending with antagonistic elements that tended to extinguish the flame and to destroy the fire. This was both an evidence to the Israelites of the celestial nature of the fire, and emblematical of the Divine element which is spiritually bestowed. In consuming the sacrifice there was a proof furnished that the offering was accepted, so that consequently the judgment should be removed, and the rain descend to fructify the land ; and in burning the wood, and stones, and dust, and evaporating the water, there was a proof furnished that nothing could resist its power. God's fire fell first upon the sacrifice that was offered for man's sins, and in consuming that sacrifice He gave a proof that the offering was accepted as an atonement for sins, so that consequently the curse has been removed from sinners. When " He spared not His own Son but delivered Him up for us all," He signified that He having been made sin for us, we should be made the righteousness of God in Him. Then the sacrifice being consumed, all other impediments shall be destroyed. Sin, Satan, and death are vanquished ; all the corruptions that fill the trenches of the

soul shall be evaporated ; not a vestige of any resisting force shall be left untouched. Viewing the perfect character of this Divine operation, an inspired apostle could confidently exclaim, " For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

5. The fire descended in answer to Elijah's prayer. Observe with what earnestness he offered up his petition, " Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the Lord God, and that thou hast turned their hearts back again." The law of the Old Testament was, " Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart." The injunction of the New Testament is, " Ask, and ye shall receive ; seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." God's favours are worth asking for. You would not think it too much to ask a friend for a favour which you need. How much more God ! Do you want some special temporal blessing ? Then ask for it. Do you want spiritual mercies ? Ask for them. Are you anxious for the conversion and spiritual welfare of a child or a friend ? Ask for it. Do you earnestly desire the outpouring of God's Spirit to accompany the preaching of the Gospel at home and abroad ? Ask for it. God has promised to answer your fervent prayers, and He cannot lie. As in the case of Elijah, the answer is sure. It has been said that " prayer is the hand that moves the hand that moves the world." It may be asked, what influence can there be in prayer to actuate an unchangeable Being ? We answer, God commands it ; this is sufficient for us. We are not to question His motives. When He commands, let us obey.

6. Elijah's prayer was offered in conjunction with his active operations. He not only prayed, but he also worked. He

erected the altar, put the wood in order, dug the trench, prepared the sacrifice and laid it on the wood. Prayers are necessary, but there must be something more. The altar must be prepared, and the offering laid upon it. God works by means which He has placed at our disposal. He expects us to employ the means. When the Israelites were in a strait between the Egyptians and the sea Moses prayed unto God. The answer was, "Wherefore criest thou unto me? Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward; but lift up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea and divide it." It was right that he should cry, but prayer alone was not sufficient under the circumstances; it was necessary to stretch out his rod over the sea, and the people must go forward. Our prayers for spiritual and temporal blessings are acceptable, but then they must be offered in connection with personal effort. The improvement of our spiritual graces will not be promoted—the progress of Divine truth will not be furthered in the world by mere prayer. Erect the altar, prepare the sacrifice, employ the means; then pray for a blessing, and success will be certain.

In conclusion, we may remark that when great purposes are to be effected in furthering the welfare of men, both God and man are to co-operate in the object. God has His part, man has his duty: if man will do his duty, God will do His part. Without God man *can* do nothing, without man God *will* not act. To attend to the altar and sacrifice is ours; to send down the fire to consume the sacrifice, and to impart conviction, is God's. The means must be used before we can consistently expect a blessing, but without the Divine blessing no means can be effectual. A gorgeous altar may be erected, a sumptuous sacrifice may be laid upon it, but unless the fire descends from heaven all will be worthless, lifeless and vain. "Paul may plant, and Apollos water, but God giveth the increase." Therefore, whilst we neglect not the appointed means, let us pray and expect, then we may feel confident as to the result.

The Ninth Sunday after Trinity.

EVENING SERVICE.—Second Lesson : Heb. i.

Verse 3.—“*Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.*”

THERE is no brightness like the brightness of Christ, consequently there is no revelation like the revelation made by Him. The object of the apostle throughout the whole of this Epistle, is to contrast Christ, and the revelation made by Him, with others to whom revelations were made, and through whom revelations were transmitted to the world. In the onset he declared in what all revelations agree, which is in their being received from God. Whether we regard the revelations given through Adam and Enoch, and Noah, before the flood, or those given through Abraham and Jacob, and Moses, and the prophets after the flood, or those given by Christ “in these last days,” they all derived their origin from the same source, and in this they were all alike. There was, however, a great difference in the manner, as well as in the nature of the communications. In times past He spake unto the fathers by the prophets *at sundry times, and divers manners*. At sundry times, or by little as they were able to receive the revelations, adding a little more light at each time to what they previously possessed. The information given to Noah was an enlargement on that given before the flood ; the communications to Abraham were of a still more lucid character ; whereas the revelations furnished to Moses and the prophets excelled all antecedents. They were also spoken to them in *divers manners*. Sometimes by an articulate voice, sometimes by dreams and visions, some-

times by silent inspiration, sometimes by Urim and Thummim, sometimes by signs from heaven ; but He has spoken to us at one time, in an uniform manner, so there can be no diversity in the teaching of the gospel. To the fathers He spake by the prophets ; to us he has spoken by His Son. The gospel, therefore, is the most perfect revelation which was made, or will be made to the sons of men ; a further discovery of His mind for the salvation of man is not to be expected, it is the last effort which the Divine mercy and goodness will make upon mankind, in order to eternal happiness. The superior dignity of the Son is expressed by His being "appointed the heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds." He possesses unlimited dominion, all things in the kingdoms of nature and grace being produced and supported by him. *By Him*, not as a subordinate instrument, but as a primary and principal agent, "Who being the brightness of his (the Father's) glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."

The text teaches us First, the character of Christ ; Secondly, the work of Christ ; and Thirdly, the position of Christ.

I. We have the character of Christ, which is presented to us by the emblems of *brightness* and *express image*.

1. He is the brightness, or the effulgence of the Father's glory. This expression evidently denotes the divine nature of Christ as being substantially the same with the Father. Thus He is "God of God, Light of Light," receiving as the Son His nature and substance from the Father, so fully and absolutely that He is in every way the same with Him in respect to His essence, and in every way like Him in respect to His person. It is by Him God is revealed to the world. "No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared Him." Even Moses, who was admitted into intimate acquaintance and communion with God, when he presumed to ask the

favour, "I beseech thee show me thy glory," was answered, "Thou canst not see my face, for there shall no man see me and live." In Christ, however, we can see the lustre of His glory, which is of the same nature and of the same continuation as the glory itself. By this means we can see God. As the natural sun can be perceived and felt only by the aid of his own beams, so all that can be seen and known of God is through the medium of the effulgence of His glory. God is in Himself infinite and incomprehensible; when we contemplate His excellencies we are overpowered with their glory and majesty, but in Christ, the Son incarnate, He has contemplated all his infinite perfections with our faith, and love, and contemplation; they all shine forth in Him, and are eminently expressed in His mediatorial offices of King, Priest, and Prophet. He is the brightness of His glory.

2. He is the express image of his person. "As is the Father, so is the Son." "The Father," he declares, "is in me, and I in him." The same essential nature and properties being in each person, by virtue of which, though distinct, they are said to be in each other. When Christ is declared to be in the form of God, it means that He is essentially God, for there is no form of the Deity but what is essential to Himself. He was absolutely God antecedently to His incarnation, and continued to be so when and after He became flesh, the whole nature of God being embodied in Him, consequently He "thought it not robbery to be equal with God,"—the express image of His person.

There is another meaning in which this sentence may be taken, that is, *He is the manifestation of God unto us*; because in Him as partaker of the Divine nature do the power, the justice, the holiness, the goodness, the grace, the love, and all the glorious properties of God shine forth in their utmost glory and beauty, and are declared unto us. The allusion is generally supposed to be to the engraving on rings, or seals, or stones, by which operation the exact image of one object is transferred to another. It may be also that the apostle refers to some representation of the glory of God by

engraving amongst the institutions of Moses. There was scarcely anything of old which more gloriously represented God than the engraving of His name on the front of the mitre of the high priest. At the sight of this the conqueror of the world, Alexander the Great, fell down in humble submission before the Jewish high priest, whilst kings and emperors were bowed in subjection under the force of his arms. The account of it we have in Exodus xxviii. 36: "Thou shalt make a plate of gold, and engrave upon it like the engraving of a signet HOLINESS TO THE LORD." Here was that name of God which denoted His essence and Being, characterized and engraven to represent His holiness and glory to the people. In Christ the Son is the real accomplishment of what was typified there, the Father having actually communicated to Him His nature, as denoted by that name, whereby being made flesh, He was able most gloriously to represent the person of the Father unto us. The whole manifestation then, of the nature of God to us, and all communications of His grace, are immediately conveyed by, and through the person of His Son.

We observe—

II. The work of Christ as the Father's Representative. He sustains, and He purifies.

1. He sustains. "Upholding all things by the word of his power." It has been already stated in the chapter, that by Him the world was made; and that world which was created by Him, is by Him preserved from sinking into its original confusion and nothingness. "And this," says St. Chrysostom, "is a greater work than that of creation: By the former all things were brought forth out of nothing; by the latter, they are preserved from that return to nothing, which their own nature, not capable of existence without dependence on their first cause, and their perpetual conflict by contrariety of qualities would precipitate them unto." Our Saviour says, "My Father worketh hitherto," or yet, "and I work." Both the Father and the Son conjointly work in

the preservation of the universe. The Son, being Heir of all things, has all power given unto Him. He has the weight of the whole creation upon His hand, and disposes of it by His power and wisdom. Created objects can no more support and dispose themselves than they could at first make themselves out of nothing. The greatest cannot conserve itself by its power and greatness, more than can the least by its distance from opposition. Were there not a mighty hand underneath every one of them, they would all sink into a chaos of confusion; or did not an effectual power influence them, they would become an inactive heap. But that which is impossible to created beings, becomes easy to Christ. He upholdeth all things *by the word* of His power. He has only to speak, and it is done, "He commandeth, and they are created." This sustaining operation is peculiarly assigned to the Son, not only as He is the eternal power and wisdom of God, but also because by His interposition as undertaking the work of mediation. He reprieved the world from an immediate dissolution upon the first entrance of sin and disorder, that it might constitute, as it were, the great stage for the mighty works of God's grace, and wisdom, and love in the redemption of its intelligent inhabitants. To this the apostle clearly refers in his epistle to the Colossians, where he gives expression to the same sentiments as in the text, showing the object to be "that in all things he might have the pre-eminence." (Col. i. 15—20.)

2. He not only upholdeth all things by the word of his power, but He has performed an act of purification by which the world is redeemed. Having declared the nature of Christ as the brightness of the Father's glory, and His power in upholding all things, the apostle shows his condescension in stooping to redeem that world which He upholds. "He had purged our sins." This does not refer to the actual cleansing of the defilement of sin by sanctifying grace; but it means to purge by expiation, or atonement; it means to purge by blood; as Aaron purged the people by "the blood of bulls and of goats," when he offered those

sacrifices for their sins. Thus Christ by making an atonement for sins, purged *our sins*, not purged *us* from our sins, which was an act by which the curse of sin being borne by Him was removed from us so that our sins should not be imputed to us.

This act He did "by Himself," by the sacrifice and offering of Himself. The high priest of old made atonement, and typically purged the sins of the people by sacrificing animals according to the appointment of the law. This our Great High Priest did by the sacrifice of Himself; also by Himself alone without a partner, without a helper, without a comforter; "Of the people there was none with him." And even the Father had withdrawn His comforting presence from Him in this time of need. Thus He expiated the guilt of sin, and satisfied the justice of God for sin, suffering as He was man, and satisfying as He was God. So great was the work of freeing us from sin that it could not be otherwise effected but by the sacrifice of the Son of God Himself.

We observe—

III. The position into which our Saviour was introduced when he had purged our sins: He "sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." Immediately after the work was done, He entered on the glorious condition here expressed; a signal pledge and evidence that what He came to perform was perfected, and that God was fully satisfied and well pleased with what He had done. The Spirit in the prophets did "testify beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." The disciples on their way to Emmaus were taught by their strange companion that "Christ ought to suffer those things, and to enter into his glory." Having finished the work which was given Him to do, He requested the Father to glorify Him with the glory which He had with Him before the world was.

His sitting at the right hand of the Majesty on high, signified—

1. A position of rest from labour and toil. The work of

purchasing redemption had been completed; the toils and sorrow, the hunger and thirst, the drudgery and fatigue, the sweat and the blood were now over. He had entered into His rest, when He should enjoy an eternal sabbath on the right hand of the Majesty on high.

2. It signifies a place of safety and security from all His adversaries and sufferings for the future. Where He is, His adversaries cannot come. He is beyond their reach, beyond their power secure in the throne and presence of God. Men and devils had assaulted Him on earth, and they may continue their wrath and malice against Him to the end of the world, as if they would crucify Him afresh: but no arm can reach Him at the right hand. "Sin hath no more power over Him." Satan has been driven from the throne, and man with all the enmity of his heart is not able to touch the glorified Lord.

3. It signifies a position of glory and honour. God the Father has clothed the Mediator with the highest dignity that heaven itself can afford. The language is metaphorical, taken from the customs of earth. The highest in estimation is placed at the right of the person in authority. Solomon placed his mother when she came to him on his right hand, as a token of exceeding honour. When Siridates, King of Armenia, came to Rome, Nero, to mark him as an honourable guest, placed him on his right hand. Scripture invariably employs the right hand to denote dignity and pre-eminence. Jacob wittingly guided his right hand to the youngest of Joseph's children to denote his superiority over his elder brother. At the last day the sheep shall be placed on the right hand of the Judge, to indicate the high honour conferred on them, whilst the goats shall be placed on His left by way of degradation.

Finally, it signifies a position of power and authority. There may be an allusion in the expression to the Sanhedrim, the highest court of judicature among the Jews. He who presided at it, being called the father of judgment, to whom belonged the execution of the sentence of the court, sat at the

right hand of the Prince of the Sanhedrim. "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." All power in heaven and upon earth is given unto Him for the defence of His Church, and for the punishment of His enemies. He is sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high, whence He governs angels in heaven, whence through His Spirit He executes the will of the Father upon earth, and whence in the last day He will judge both the quick and the dead.

In closing this most comprehensive subject for the present, we may remark that in the dispensation and counsel of grace, God has determined that all communications of Himself to us, shall be by His Son incarnate. This the whole gospel testifies, and the truth has its foundation in the very subsistence of the glorious persons of the Trinity. The fact discovers to us the necessity of our coming to God through Christ. God is said to be in "thick darkness," and also to dwell in light, to which no man can approach. We cannot come near, nor comprehend the invisible and eternal Being but through a Mediator. He, as the "brightness of His glory," has revealed Him, and through Him we can approach the throne of Deity and find Him to be a reconciled God.

The Tenth Sunday after Trinity.

MORNING SERVICE.—Second Lesson : Acts iii.

Verses 20, 21.—“ *And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the heavens must receive until the time of restitution of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.*”

IN this chapter we have a miracle and a sermon. The miracle was performed to prepare the way for the sermon, and the sermon was preached to expound the miracle. In the miracle we perceive the power with which the apostles were invested, and in the sermon we perceive the doctrines which the apostles entertained. There were some points in which the miracles of Christ and His apostles were identical, but there were others in which they widely differed. They were identical in that they were all phenomena produced by an extraordinary effect of Divine power, for the purpose of confirming declared facts; they differed in the mode of execution, as Christ performed His in His own name, and by His own authority, whilst those of the apostles were performed in the name and by the authority of Christ. The miracle of this chapter, like all those of Christ and His apostles, was genuine, wrought publicly, in open daylight, in the presence of a numerous assembly, at a season when the greatest crowds met together at the Temple in Jerusalem. It was done on the afternoon of the day of Pentecost. On the morning of that day the remarkable outpouring of the Holy Ghost was realized by the apostles, and by three thousand souls under their ministry. The power that performed a miracle of grace in the morning

performed a miracle of Providence in the evening, by both of which the truth of the Gospel was established to the conviction of at least five thousand in that very day.

We shall leave the miracle and turn to the sermon. The subject of the sermon was Jesus of Nazareth, in whose name the miracle had just been wrought. The preacher was Peter, a bold, uncompromising man, who being endowed with the Holy Ghost, was determined to proclaim the truth whatever might be the consequences. He tells the Jews that it was through the power of Him whom they had condemned and crucified the lame man was made whole; and that, having been raised from the dead, He was able not only to perform a physical act of goodness, but was also able to blot out their sins, bad as they had been, if they repented and turned unto him. "Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord." By the times of refreshing some understand that refreshing state of mind declared by the Gospel for all those whose sins are pardoned. Those who entertain this view change the word *when* into *that*, and read, "*that* the times of refreshing," the time of peace of conscience, the times of confident trust, the times of aspiring hope, "may come from the presence of the Lord," from His presence as the giver of every good and perfect gift, as the bestower of all the blessings which follow in the train of pardon. Some regard the passage as referring to the destruction of Jerusalem, when every true penitent should enjoy rest by escaping the judgments which were to befall the Jews. But the times of refreshing are thought by most divines to signify the day of judgment, when all impenitent sinners shall be punished, and all those who are penitent shall enjoy rest, because they shall enjoy a full and complete absolution from all their sins. This seems to correspond with the words of our text, into which we shall now briefly enter, and shall observe, first, the fact of our Saviour being now in heaven, and shall return to earth in a future day; secondly, the universal order which shall be restored into the constitution of all things at that time; and

thirdly, the harmony of both the Old and New Testaments respecting Christ and His doctrines.

I. The fact of our Saviour being now in heaven, and shall return on a future day to earth. And He shall send Jesus Christ, whom the heavens must receive, "or retain."

1. He is to be retained in heaven. When St. Peter spoke these words heaven had received the human nature of Christ, and He had obtained that authority and glory in the world of light which were due to Him for all that He had done when here upon earth. The heavens *must* receive Him. There was a twofold necessity for this. The one was that He might obtain that legitimate position of honour to which He was justly entitled. On last Sunday evening we attempted to show that He "sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high," to partake of that rest, security, honour, and power which He had won by His labours, sufferings, and death for man. Such a position was a stipulation in the eternal covenant between the Father and the Son. In reference to this the apostle asks, "For to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool?" And to show the superior dignity which the Father had engaged to confer upon Him, he says in another verse, "But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever, a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom." Christ Himself was so assured of this honour, that, before the Council of the Chief Priests and the Elders of the People, even in the prospect of a degrading cross and a cruel death, He could express the confidence of His expectation, "Hereafter shall the Son of Man sit on the right hand of the power of God." It behoved Christ to suffer these things which He endured upon earth, and to enter into His glory. There, in the execution of the complete functions of His mediatorial offices, He is to receive the homage of "things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth," whilst "ten thousand times ten thousands, and thousands of thousands" of angels celebrate His praises in those expressive words, "Worthy is the Lamb

that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."

There was also a necessity that the heavens should receive Him, that He might be in a position to intercede for His people. We are told that "He ever liveth to intercede for us." This He does in His person as mediator, which involves the necessity of His being near the throne of God to render His intercession effectual. Some of the ancient fathers were of opinion that Christ executes this office by presenting continually His human nature before the throne of His Father. His human nature being in heaven is a constant memorial of what He suffered for the glory of the Father, and for the salvation of the Church. All this was done by Him in His human nature, which is, therefore, an unceasing and affecting symbol of His wonderful labours for these great ends. This is consequently one great reason why "the heavens *must* receive Him."

2. We are told here that He shall return again. "And he" (that is, the Father) "shall send Jesus Christ." He is sent, in the declarations of the Gospel, to offer terms of reconciliation to the world. He is sent to bestow, through His Spirit, all the blessings treasured in Him for those who repent and are converted; but more especially He shall be sent in the last day to complete the salvation of His followers, and the condemnation of His enemies. Being constituted Judge of the quick and the dead, He will appear to the joy and happiness of all who love Him, and to the grief and confusion of all who hate Him. Until then the heaven will retain Him. We are not to expect His bodily presence upon earth, either in the Eucharist, as the Papists will have it, or, to reign personally amongst His people for a thousand years, as the Millennarians will have it. The unanimous declarations of Scripture seem to be that when He is to appear again it will be to judgment. But—

II. We shall proceed to observe the universal order that shall be restored unto the constitution of all things when He shall again appear. "Whom the heavens must receive until

the times of restitution of all things." Thus, we are to infer that all things physical and moral shall be restored to their primitive condition.

The word *restitution* signifies to repay that which has been unjustly taken away, and also to replace that which has been disordered. In both these meanings will the fact be realized at the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. The world has been reduced to a state of melancholy disorder by sin; injustice, in its grossest forms, is practised between man and man; the innocent is oppressed and robbed; the guilty tyrannize and persecute; no human law in its most perfect execution has been able to equalize rights, and to compel the unjust to atone to the full extent for the injuries which he has inflicted. In the day of judgment, however, the crooked shall be made straight; innocency shall be vindicated, guilt shall be exposed and condemned, whilst the guilty shall be compelled to acknowledge the wrong, and shall be punished for the injustice.

Sin has also caused incalculable confusion in the physical world, so much so that "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." The inanimate creation is deranged, the brute creation groans under the bondage of man's corruption. Both are figuratively said to be earnestly expecting and waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God, which the one shall realize by being purified by fire, so that there will be a new heaven and a new earth; and the other by being for ever delivered from the burthen of existence. But more especially the restitution will consist in the moral restoration of the intelligent world to its original state of purity and holiness. The impure, the vile, and the wicked of both angels and men shall be cast into the gulf of perdition; nothing shall be left in the new heaven and the new earth except beings of strict purity, such as are angels in glory, and such as was Adam in paradise before the fall. All enemies shall be then destroyed; Satan, sin, and death shall be finally dethroned, and all wickedness shall be for ever subdued. "Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of Hosts shall reign in Mount Zion, and in

Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously." Until then His glorious body shall remain in heaven. Until every object intended to be effected by the dispensation of the Gospel shall be obtained, until God has manifested His patience towards obstinate transgressors, until sinners have been invited to receive the overtures of mercy, until the souls of all His people are regenerated by the workings of the Spirit, and purified by sanctifying grace, until every member of His family shall be delivered from pain and sorrow, until all the dispensations of time shall have done their work, and until all the ancient prophecies shall have been fulfilled, the heavens shall retain Him. When all this shall have been accomplished, then shall Jesus Christ appear the second time, coming in the clouds of heaven to perfect the work committed to His charge as mediator between God and man. We come—

III. To observe the concord of both the Old and New Testaments respecting Christ and His doctrine, "Which before was preached unto you, and which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began."

Christ had been before preached unto the Jews, having been portrayed unto them by types, delineated by shadows, pointed out by emblems, and declared by the voices of living messengers. He was proclaimed by Moses and the prophets; preached by John the Baptist; the doctrines were announced by Himself; and He had been already held up in the ministry of the apostles, as well before as after His resurrection and ascension.

The Jewish economy was not merely intended for the immediate benefit of the chosen people, but whilst it furnished them with a motive to serve God, and to adhere to the precepts of Mount Sinai, it extended to illustrate future blessings which should be realized by both Jews and Gentiles through the doctrines which Mount Calvary supplied.

The words of the New Testament are like threads of gold interwoven with the precepts of the Old, so as to form a curious web of such proportionate beauty that won the admira-

tion and sustained the hopes of all the faithful from the creation of the world to the incarnation of Christ. It was to magnify the "Desire of all nations" one nation was made the conservative of the oracles of God. Those oracles were supplied to them by littles: and in every additional supply there was an additional unmistakable token of the future blessedness of the Gospel. The scheme of every prior dispensation afforded a relief of mercy and a gleam of hope centering in Christ, who is the grand object of all the Divine dispensations from the beginning of the world to its close.

God did not leave His Son without a witness in any age of the world, for we are certain that there were some throughout the successive ages who earnestly looked for the Messiah, and the blessings of His kingdom. What preserved our first parents from despair, but the promise that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head? Abel in his offered sacrifice recognized the sacrifice of Christ; Enoch prophesied of His coming; Abraham saw His Day afar off, and was glad; Jacob, with his dying breath, could testify, "I have waited for thy salvation, O God;" Job was supported in the midst of his toils by knowing that his "Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth;" David was satisfied when he felt that he should awake in his likeness; Moses, Samuel, and all the prophets could join with the Church in that energetic prayer, "O, that the Salvation of Israel were come out of Zion." "God hath spoken by the mouth of all the prophets since the world began."

Then, brethren, since we are assured that Christ is the substance of all the Scriptures, let us reverence them above all other records, and since they unanimously declare that Christ being now in heaven shall hereafter appear to restore all things, prepare my soul to meet Him.

The Tenth Sunday after Trinity.

EVENING SERVICE.—First Lesson : 1 Kings xxii.

Verse 8.—“ *And the King of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, There is yet one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may enquire of the Lord ; but I hate him, for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil. And Jehoshaphat said, Let not the king say so.*”

GREAT sinners must expect to be visited with great judgments ; and though those judgments be delayed to confirm the long-suffering of God, yet they will ultimately come and will not miscarry. When men incur signal judgments in this world, it is by persisting in a long course of sin in spite of warnings and threatenings. Ahab had been repeatedly warned, now in one way, then in another ; but nothing seemed to produce a proper permanent effect on his mind. One might have thought that the three years and a half drought in the land, the signal defeat of the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, together with the repeated verbal messages of Elijah, would have been sufficient to induce him to relent, to forsake his wickedness, and return unto the Lord. But no, the insinuations of his wicked wife, and the propensities of his own equally wicked heart held him as it were with an iron grasp, thus going from bad to worse, and from worse to worst, until he became ripe for destruction. If the repentance he professed upon being reproved by Elijah after the tragedy of Naboth the Jezreelite had been permanent, doubtless God would have forgiven him the past, and would have honoured him, as He had done, with success ; instead of that he soon returned to his evil ways, for which cause God sent upon him strong delusion that he should believe a lie, being

not ashamed to own to the King of Judah that he hated the man who spoke the truth to him in the name of God. Thus when persons become hardened by sin, and by repeated acts of iniquity fill the cup of God's displeasure, nothing will prevent them from rushing headlong to their own destruction.

Micaiah, the son of Imlah, is supposed to have been the prophet who reproved Ahab for dismissing Benhadad, the King of Syria, of which we read in the twentieth chapter, and that it was because of the judgments with which he then threatened him, Ahab entertained that strong animosity against him; but, however strong his hatred before, it became still stronger when he heard first the ironical language, and then the faithful parable with which he addressed him respecting the battle of Ramoth Gilead. The sequel of the story, which you have already heard in the reading of the Lesson, brings out the character of Ahab in the strongest colours. His cruelty towards Micaiah, and his treachery towards Jehoshaphat clearly prove how worthily he deserved the fate which soon afterwards befel him.

There are two things which suggest themselves to our consideration in contemplating this passage of Holy Scripture. First, that God's message to those who persist in doing wickedly is a message of evil. Secondly, that the wicked hate those who have the courage to declare the truth to them in God's name.

I. We observe that God's message to those who persist in doing wickedly is a message of evil. Every one of such a character can say with Ahab, "He doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil." How can it be otherwise when wickedness is so contrary to the character of God, so opposed to His glory, and so destructive to His works. The burden of this message of evil consists sometimes of providential judgments in this world, but chiefly of spiritual punishment in the world to come. We might refer to a series of the most appalling providential judgments which are recorded in both the Old and New Testaments as being consequent upon per-

sistency in wickedness; but as those are less perceptible under the present dispensation of things than they were of old, we shall more especially fix our attention on the future judgments which are reserved for the wicked. We must not think that if a man is allowed to go on successfully to the end of his life, notwithstanding the enormity of the crimes of which he has been guilty, God forgets his iniquities and lets them drop to the ground without any further notice. The whole tenor of Scripture teaches us that there is a day of retribution—that ungodly men as well as the angels who kept not their first estate are reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the last day—that the tares which are suffered to grow among the wheat are ultimately to be consumed—and that endless destruction awaits the impenitent hereafter. The reasons for these messages of evil are—

1. Because the purity of God's nature insists upon the punishment of wickedness. He is of purer eyes than to behold evil and look upon iniquity. Holiness and corruption cannot dwell together, dry stubble cannot come in contact with consuming fire without being burnt, light and darkness cannot coalesce, there is no agreement between God and Belial. "The pure in heart" only "shall see God." We cannot form an idea of the extreme purity of His nature, the whitest snow, the purest metal, the brightest ray fall far short of those qualities which are necessary to give but a faint idea of it. It is blended with His essence; being of infinite perfection, without it He cannot exist. When we think on the other hand that wickedness is of so foul a nature that the filthiest object in creation cannot furnish an emblem sufficiently abominable to represent it; when we think that it attempts to remove the stability of God's throne, when we think that it dims the lustre of God's universe, when we think that it defaces the impression of God's image, when we think that it despises the love of God's Son, when we think that it slight the overtures of God's grace; shall He not visit for this? and will He not punish those who continue to indulge in that which He so infinitely abominates?

2. The vindication of God's justice requires that evil should be punished. God is just. Every one must acknowledge this, all good angels and good men acknowledge it with admiration and gratitude; all bad angels and condemned bad men acknowledge it with terror and dismay: those who do not acknowledge it are such in the flesh who would wish it to be otherwise. Inasmuch as He is just, He will not overlook the rewards and punishments due to His creatures respectively. This world being a state of trial, in it a complete exhibition of justice cannot be made. Probably all that is just in such a state cannot be seen to be so, especially by creatures of our limited comprehensions. Our discernment is disproportionate to the objects of investigation. Amid the multitude of those objects we are lost, by their variety we are perplexed, by their strangeness we are staggered, by the apparent dissimilar and often seemingly inconsistent relations which they bear to each other, we are not unnaturally nor unfrequently overwhelmed with difficulties, doubts, and distresses. "Clouds and darkness are round about Him;" but the application of that justice which we cannot perceive now we shall see hereafter. He has informed us that there is beyond the grave a future state of things, and that at the end of the present existence He has appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness, and will reward every man in that state according to his works. It is impossible that a Being of infinite virtue should not be just, and as that justice is not fully vindicated in this life, it must be in another. This is prophesying evil concerning the wicked, but "shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

3. The right of the innocent demand the retribution of the wicked. God's treatment of His intelligent creatures must be equalized. The righteous does not receive His equal share in this life; he often has to drag out a miserable existence in a hovel, whilst his wicked neighbour is pampered with the luxuries of life; dwelling in a mansion and enjoying all that heart can wish. The pious Asaph well nigh stumbled at the contrast between the righteous and the wicked. "But as for

me," he says, "my feet were almost gone ; my steps had well nigh slipped, for I was envious at the foolish when I saw the prosperity of the wicked." (Ps. lxxiii. 2—13.) But looking a little forward he came to a different conclusion. "Until I went into the sanctuary of God ; then understood I their end. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places ; thou castedst them down into destruction." In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, our Saviour fully establishes the fact, where Abraham is represented to say, "Son, remember that thou in thy life time received thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things, but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented." What is to become of the oppression and tyranny which is so often practised by the guilty over the innocent, and carried on for a life-time ? What is to become of the persecutions, of the imprisonments, and of the tortures which have so often been unjustly and maliciously inflicted upon the good ? What is to become of the rivers of blood that have been shed from the veins of God's own people if there be not a retributive day of judgment to recompense for all this ? What say the souls under the altar ? "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell upon the earth ?" How long ! It was "until their brethren that be killed as they were should be fulfilled." The vengeance is only delayed ; it must come. These are heavy tidings ; it is not prophesying good, but evil ; but it is an evil which God commands us to declare, and woe be unto us unless we declare it honestly and faithfully.

II. That the wicked hate those who have the courage to speak the truth in God's name. Ahab had no other reason to hate Micaiah, the son of Imlah, than this : he was a good subject, an inoffensive citizen, but he had told him the truth, which was an offence not to be pardoned. It was not Micaiah's fault that the truth was to him evil, and not good. His own actions had dropped the bitter ingredient into the cup, and he dreaded the consequences. The obstinacy of his disposition, the pride of his heart, and his love of ease in sin that made truth distasteful to him, and made him conse-

quently hate the messenger. "I hate him, for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil."

Those three combined causes still actuate the wicked to hate the messengers of truth.

1. They are obstinate and wish to observe the bent of their own hearts. This is one phase of sin, and draws upon man the unmitigated displeasure of God. This was the sin of Saul which incurred that cutting reproof from Samuel. "For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry." It was the sin of Ananias and Sapphira which caused them to sin against the Holy Ghost. Many men in the face of conviction will persist in a course of sin, because they will have their own way. Has not this been the ruin of thousands even in a temporal point of view? Friendly advice has been seasonably proposed, even earnest petitions have been imploringly offered; but so wedded were they to their own opinions that no persuasion could influence them to change their intentions. How many a youth has been led to moral ruin merely from an obstinate opposition to the admonitions of wellwishers? A father's entreaties, a mother's tears, a pastor's prayers have been set at nought; nothing could succeed to save the self-devoted victim. In the book of Job it is said that "vain man would be wise, though man be born like a wild ass's colt." He will obstinately adhere to his own evil ways, and will hate those who warn him of his danger, and advise him to retrace his steps.

2. The pride of man's heart, which is probably at the root of his obstinacy, is the cause of this hatred. This was one great cause of Ahab's hating Micaiah. He, being the King of Israel, could not stoop to be corrected by a poor insignificant prophet, perhaps one who could not boast of a high earthly origin. He might have proceeded from a family of little or no note in Israel, and might have been contemptible in the estimation of the great and noble of this world. Why should a king submit to be corrected by such an one! "I hate him" is the too common language of men respecting such. The pride of position, the pride of wealth, the pride of learning, the pride of talent often stands in the way of correction.

The reproof may come from some poor homeless uneducated messenger of God ; it is too much for the high and the great of the world to be taught by him. " Have any of the rulers and of the scribes believed on him ? " was a question emphatically asked by the Jews of our Saviour's time. The poor insignificant Jesus of Nazareth, only the son of a carpenter, residing in a miserable little town of Galilee ! how could the rulers stoop to be dictated to by Him ? They hated Jesus as much as Ahab hated Micaiah. Is it not so still ? Men are too proud to be told the truth, especially if that truth be told by a person whom they consider beneath themselves.

3. Another cause is that the carnal mind loves its ease. A little more sleep and a little more slumber is the voice of the spiritual sluggard. The awakening of conscience is an unpleasant feeling which most people wish to shake off. The troubling of the waters brings to the surface what we may be glad to conceal even from ourselves. To repent is bitter. Rousing the sensations of the heart causes an alarm. We wish to indulge the pleasures of sin, we would gratify the lusts of the flesh, we would plunge into dissipation and excess, and this cannot be done when conscience witnesses against us ; our rest is disturbed, our sensual peace is destroyed ; woe unto that man who will attempt to interfere with our ease. " I hate him."

There are two or three questions which we should ask ourselves individually before dismissing this solemn subject. 1. Whether is best to be awakened now by a faithful ministry while there is time to repent, and while there is hope of pardon, or to be awakened by the trump of God and the ravings of conscience when the avenues of mercy shall have been for ever closed ? 2. Whether is best to listen to poor Micaiah warning us to avoid the evil, or to the lying prophets leading us onward to our destruction ? 3. Whether is best to bend to the mild authority of a merciful Saviour now, or to break under the iron rule of an inexorable Judge hereafter ? Let us settle these questions between us and God, and pray for His Spirit to direct us to a correct conclusion.

The Eleventh Sunday after Trinity.

MORNING SERVICE.—First Lesson : 2 Kings v.

Verse 13.—“ *And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?* ”

NAAMAN was a great man in worldly honour and renown, being general of the Syrian army and highly esteemed by his king. We have no account of him except in this place, and in the reference made to this circumstance by our Saviour. Some have thought that he was the man who “drew the bow at a venture,” and slew Ahab the king of Israel, but this is supported by no evidence except that he was a man of extraordinary courage; hence his success and promotion. However, like all other men, Naaman’s high position did not exempt him from the calamities of life to which humanity is subject: “he was a leper.” This embittered his cup of happiness, and degraded his position of honour. But how mysterious the providence of God! the very affliction which was his greatest grief, was productive of the greatest blessing of his life. The marauding parties of his army having brought among their booties a child of pious parents from the land of Israel, who for her exemplary conduct was taken into the service of Naaman’s wife, and who carried the remembrance of her religious training even into an idolatrous family; this child, feeling for the condition of her master, earnestly recommended the means within her knowledge to recover him of his leprosy. Insignificant and despised as this little maid was, her earnestness prevailed, her instructions

were followed, the prophet that was in Samaria was consulted, which resulted in the perfect cure of the leper.

For our improvement we may regard Naaman as an emblem of mankind generally, both in his original and in his restored state.

I. Naaman was an emblem of man in his original state. As was he morally and physically, so is man morally and spiritually. In tracing the concise history recorded in this chapter, we find that the resemblance is almost a perfect parallel.

1. He was affected with a grievous disease — a disease which pervaded his whole constitution — a disease which separated him from the dearest of his friends—a disease which degraded him even in his own estimation—a disease which none could cure but God alone. We need only refer to the description given in the Pentateuch to find that these were the characteristics of the leprosy. Such as was Naaman naturally is man spiritually. He is affected with a disease even more virulent than the leprosy, inasmuch as it has affected not only the whole constitution of the body, but also the whole substance of the soul; it has separated him not only from the pure portion of angels and men, but also from God; it has not only degraded him in his own estimation, but also in the estimation of the whole universe; it is not only incurable to the most skilful inventions of man, but it requires an extra effort of Divine power to effect a cure.

2. Naaman was in a state of ignorance respecting the real nature and properties of the true God, and was a worshipper of a false deity. Being in such proximity to the country of Israel, and having doubtless made repeated invasions in that country, he must have often heard of the God of Israel. The miracle of Mount Carmel, where the Lord proved that He was God, was not done in a corner, and did not occur long before this; such a report would soon circulate even to Syria, so that Naaman must have known something of His extraordinary Majesty and greatness: notwithstanding, according to his

own confession he worshipped Rimmon. The historical knowledge of God, or even a belief in His existence, does not establish a saving knowledge of Him. Many, alas! who believe in the being of God, and admire the works of God as the productions of His infinite power and wisdom, are, nevertheless, totally destitute of that true saving knowledge which alone can purify the heart and renovate the soul. Whilst they acknowledge the God of heaven, they worship idols of their own head's invention, which are as contemptible and vile as the idol before which Naaman and his master bowed.

3. Naaman was of a haughty and arrogant disposition. See how he went first to the king with the recommendation of a king, regarding it too great a condescension to apply to the prophet of Samaria, as he was instructed by his informant; and when he was ultimately compelled to go to the prophet, see with what pageantry he appeared, coming with his horses and with his chariots, and with a long retinue of attendants; and when Elisha sent a messenger with the prescription, how indignantly he was offended, and "went away in a rage." This disposition was not at all peculiar to Naaman; it is the general characteristic of the carnal mind; for being enmity against God, it is not subject to the law of God. Self-aggrandisement and haughtiness of spirit are natural to man. He aims at something great, and expects that his mind should be pampered even by the messenger of God. Observe how that man pictured to himself the grandeur of the ceremonial display which he expected the prophet to make in his presence. "Behold, I thought, he will surely come out unto me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper." Mistaken man! dost thou think that God will condescend to humour thine ostentation? If thou art mortified by the simplicity of the means, and the apparent lack of personal respect in the treatment, be not surprised if thy disease should not be removed. Was it not the simplicity of Christ that offended the Jews? was it not the simplicity of the gospel that offended the Greeks, when it was to

the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness? and is it not the same simplicity that still offends so many who come to be healed? The juggling pretensions of the Brahmin, the physical force of the Mahomedan, or the imposing ceremonies of the Papist seem to be more congenial to the man of the world than serving God in the Spirit, and believing in the Lord Jesus Christ.

4. Naaman thought his own means superior to those prescribed by God's prophet. "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them and be clean?" Yes, thou mayest wash in them from "morn till eve," and repeat the operation every day of thy life, but as to becoming clean thou never wilt. Why; what superior virtue can there be in the waters of Jordan more than those of Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus? Nothing whatever, physically considered. They contain no medicinal properties different from other waters, especially there can be no virtue in them to cure the leprosy. But then God commands it, and the virtue consists in the application of the means in obedience to His command. God commands you and me to repent and believe the gospel as the only means of salvation. We wish to build a church or an asylum, or inflict upon ourselves a long course of bodily penance, or perform liberal acts of charity, or go through a whole round of ceremonial forms; these are our Abana and Pharpar which we think better than God's Jordan. We wish to wash in them and be clean. These are good in their places. Abana and Pharpar could cleanse outward impurities from the body, but could not cleanse the leper; our external observance of religious duties are necessary to adorn our character, but they will not save the soul.

II. Naaman's restoration from a state of leprosy to a state of health, was an emblem of man's restoration from a state of sin to a state of grace.

We may trace it in its origin, in its progress, and in its results.

1. His restoration was the gift of God ; bestowed upon him of God's goodness, through God's instruments, and by God's means. It was also bestowed upon him when all other means had failed. Doubtless a man in Naaman's position had consulted the best of the faculty, had received the most skilful treatment, and had exhausted the resources of all human art. It was when he was in a hopeless condition that God, in His providence, ordered that the little maid who referred him to the prophet who was in Samaria, should be taken to his house, that He instructed her to give him the healing prescription, and that He miraculously furnished the waters of Jordan with the power of cleansing the leper. Our salvation is solely of God. He planned it, He wrought it, He raises the instruments, He applies the means, and He renders the whole efficacious for the restoration of the soul. This he does when all other resources fail the sinner. Other means he has tried in vain. Like the woman in the gospel he has exhausted all his substance in consulting physicians of his own choice before he has consented to come to God through the Saviour ; but though he has, perhaps for years, despised and rejected the means of Divine appointment, yet when he comes he is by no means cast out, the healing waters are applied to his wounds, and he obtains a perfect cure.

2. Naaman was induced to comply with the plan revealed by God's prophet, through the affectionate and earnest persuasion of his servants ; more thoughtful and wise than himself, "his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it ? how much rather then, when he saith unto thee, Wash, and be clean." How kind and affectionate the address, and above all how reasonable the argument ! Why had he not seen this himself ? it was because prejudice and pride had blinded his eyes. It was not consistent with his own notion of the means of cure. It is a pity that persons need be persuaded and pressed to do that which is so much for their own interest ; but so it is. God sends line upon line to induce people to save their lives,

and to accept the means of their own salvation. His servants are sent to "compel," or to invite "them to come in," and like the apostles they persuade men. In season and out of season they are commanded to preach the word, praying "in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

8. Naaman obtained his cure by implicit obedience to God's command. Not only he went down, but "dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God." A mere solitary compliance is not sufficient, there must be a persevering effort to obey. If we would be Christ's disciples, we must take up the cross *daily* and follow Him. Follow Him through good and evil report—follow Him in humble submission to His minutest instructions—follow Him to the end. Thus Naaman's "flesh came again like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean," thus also we shall realize the blessings connected with obedience, and obtain eternal life.

4. A thorough change was effected in Naaman's mind. He came and *stood* before the man of God. He was now truly humbled, having left all his state and equipage behind him; his proud spirit had been subdued; he had cast away his empty boasting about the rivers of his own country, and his high notions of how the cure should be effected. It was the *leper* that was proud and dictatorial, the *cleansed man* was humble and submissive. It is often the case that those who have the least to value themselves by, are the most haughty, whereas the excellent of the earth are the most humble, knowing they have nothing but what they have received.

5. He acknowledged the exclusive right of the true God to be worshipped and adored. "Behold now I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel." His newly acquired knowledge was yet in its infancy, he had yet to learn that the God of Israel was the God of "*all the earth*." But it was a great confession from a heathen. He spoke from a conviction that those who were termed gods were no gods. A conviction of the truth is the first step to reformation. Light shines into the soul by degrees; the full flow of spiritual

knowledge does not enter at once, but when the twilight dawns there is a progressive improvement; in some instances it may be slow, but in the case of Naaman it was rapid, for before he left the prophet he formed a resolution to worship no God but the Lord. "Shall there not then," he says, "be given to thy servant two mules' burden of earth; for thy servant will henceforth offer neither burnt-offering nor sacrifice unto other gods, but unto the Lord." Shall there not be given to thy servant two mules' burden of earth? what for? Evidently to erect an altar unto the Lord, deeming no earth worthy of such an object, but the earth of Israel. What a change! a few hours previously Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, were better than *all* the waters of Israel, now two mules' burden of the earth of Israel is better than *all* the earth of Syria. Such are the results of a thorough change of heart; what was before the most highly prized objects become worthless in our estimation, and regarded unworthy of being offered on the altar of God. Do we not here read the experience of the great apostle in a later age? "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ; yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord," &c. (Phil. iii. 7—10.)

Finally, Naaman regrets his past offences, and prays for pardon. "In this thing the Lord pardon thy servant; that when my master goeth into the house of Rimmon to worship there, and he leaneth on my hand and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon; when I bow down myself in the house of Rimmon, the Lord pardon thy servant in this thing." It is not likely that Naaman asked, nor that the prophet granted indulgence for future sins, therefore as many learned divines justly remark, the original may be legitimately read in the past, and not in the future. He had been in the habit of attending the king, and of joining himself in the heathen worship of Rimmon. What the god Rimmon was we shall not now pause to enquire, but he was the god worshipped by the Syrians of those days. Naaman had now

seen the folly and wickedness of what he had been guilty, and earnestly prayed for pardon. This is an example worthy of imitation. When we reflect on the past we have reason to regret many acts in our lives. How earnestly should we beg forgiveness! a deep conviction of the evil of sin will produce this earnestness in prayer, for we must feel that without forgiveness there can be no peace, no salvation, no heaven.

The Eleventh Sunday after Trinity.

EVENING SERVICE.—Second Lesson : James ii.

Verse 26.—“*For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.*”

THERE seems to be an apparent contradiction between St. Paul and St. James on the subject of faith and works. St. Paul in his Epistle to the Romans says, “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.” Whilst St. James says, “Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.” To reconcile these two passages of Holy Scripture it is necessary to consider the subjects on which the apostles respectively wrote, and the class of persons to whom they were writing. St. Paul then is proving how a man can be *justified with God*, and is arguing the impossibility of justification by works of the law, or the works which the law requires. Let us ask the question, What does the law require ? The answer is, It requires *perfect* obedience to all its commandments. “The soul that sinneth shall die.” “Cursed is he who continueth not in *all* things written in the book of the law to do them.” “For, whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.” Under the force of these sentences, “the whole world is guilty before God.” The apostle tells us what the consequence is. “Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh can be justified in his sight.” Inasmuch as the law of God demands *perfect* obedience, and its penalty is attached to *every* sin, then even *one* sin ruins the hope of man, and effectually debars him from justification before God, on the ground of merit or obedience. The Apostle Paul disputes with those who denied this, and who expected justification on the ground of their own meritorious obedience. No man is accepted with

God on the ground of merit or perfect obedience to the law, for no one has ever done all which the law requires. But there is a way by which the sinner is justified notwithstanding his guilt, that is by faith in Jesus Christ, who died to procure mercy for sinners, so that they might be pardoned and accepted, not *meritoriously*, but *gratuitously*, and this is the argument of Paul when he says that "a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law."

St. James, on the other hand, is not speaking of the works *of the law*, but of the works of *faith*, or the works by which a person's justification is vindicated before men. He does not deny the necessity of faith without the deeds of the law to be justified before God, but he maintains the necessity of works proceeding from faith to prove our justification. He maintains that no man has any claim to the faith of a Christian who does not at the same time exhibit good works; in other words, he maintains that a mere speculative faith is not a real Christian faith. He appeals to the examples of Abraham and Rahab in order to confirm the sentiment which he avows; and asks whether the faith which they possessed did not co-operate with works when they were justified? It is then with those who make pretensions to Christian faith without the public exhibition of its fruits that this apostle has to do. True faith is an operative faith; wherever it exists it will manifest itself in good works. It claims no merit, but it spurns inaction. Like the leaven in the meal it works itself throughout the whole mass of Christian graces, and exhibits itself in every action of life. The faith of Abraham was inseparable from good works. It shone out through that medium in a most conspicuous manner, and thus constituted him "the father of the faithful." "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." The comparison of the apostle is perfect. The parallel between a dead body and a dead faith is most consistent with truth. As the one is imperfect, useless, and loathsome, so is the other to all practical purposes. All that enobles and dignifies the two being wanting, they become objectionable to both God and man. As it

is necessary to the utility of a living body to be united to the soul, so it is necessary to the utility of a living Christian's faith that it brings forth works of obedience in the Christian's life.

We may, therefore, direct your attention, first, to the *principle* of faith, and, secondly, to the *evidences* of faith.

I. Let us notice the *principle* of faith. Faith as a principle is a firm belief in the statements of Scripture as emanations from the Divine mind. It consists of two branches, the one being speculative, the other being saving.

1. Speculative faith is a mere consent given to the declarations of God's Word. It may comprehend the whole orthodox creed of a Christian, and acknowledge as true every statement from the beginning of Genesis to the end of the Revelation. It may comprise within its claims the existence, the unity, and the attributes of God, the distinctness, and at the same time, the oneness of the persons in the Holy Trinity, the justness, the purity, and the minuteness of the law, the beauty, the comprehensiveness, and the power of the Gospel. It may regard the histories, the prophecies, the miracles, and the precepts of the Scriptures as accredited facts. It may entertain a clear view of the doctrines of the Old and New Testaments, believing Jesus to be the true Son of God, sent to assume the nature of man for the purpose of adopting man's legal position, thereby suffering the penalty due to man's disobedience, and thus atoning for man's transgression. It may look into the stable of Bethlehem and admire the real condescension of Him who is there cradled in a manger, and then follow His footsteps throughout a life of degradation and pain until on Calvary He utters the words, "It is finished." After that follow Him to the grave, witnessing both His burial and resurrection, and then stand with the disciples on the Mount of Olives gazing at His ascension into heaven. It may realize the fulness of the riches which are invested in Him for the benefit of His followers. Yes, every iota of what is required to constitute an evangelical profession may be thus entertained, and

after all it is but an act of the understanding in which the heart has no interest. Such a faith as this is possessed by the devils mentioned by St. James in this chapter, who "believe and tremble," going probably a step further than many who give their consent to the sentiments which we have briefly summed up. But—

2. There is a *saving* faith which is an operation of the heart consequent upon the above act of the understanding. It is to this faith both St. Paul and St. James refer as being the condition of man's justification. This faith consists in a full implicit confidence in the promises and faithfulness of God, and a self-denying reliance upon the sacrifice and intercession of Christ. Such a faith takes in the whole motive of God as tending to elevate the character of man, and regards all His declarations as intended for the benefit of His intelligent creatures. In respect to God's providential dispensations there is a perfect resignation to the Divine will, knowing that all things shall work together for good to them that love Him. Afflictions are regarded as the medicine of heaven to the soul, trials as the loving corrections of an unerring Father, bereavements as the means of disentangling the mind from the connections of earth, and every disappointment as the drawing of the affections to the things of eternity. The righteousness of the Saviour alone is regarded as the medium of acceptance with God. There is no mixing up of one's own merits with the merits of Christ, no pleading of present virtue for the pardon of past vice, no giving of the fruit of the body for the sin of the soul, no good resolutions for the future to atone for the delinquencies of the past. It is an entire *divestment* of self, and an entire *investment* of Christ. Such was the faith of St. Paul when he said, "And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is of the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." And such must be our faith to render us acceptable in the sight of God. We come—

II. To the evidences of faith. "For as the body without

the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." It is the soul that makes the living man, it is the works that make the living faith. The mere digging of a pit in the earth will not form a fountain ; it may be in the shape of a well, but unless there be a spring issuing forth to produce streams, it will be nothing but a useless excavation. If there be a principle of saving faith in the soul there will be good works issuing as streams from a fountain in proof of a spring.

As the principles, so the evidences of faith consist of two branches, the one bending towards God, and the other bending towards man ; in both cases they may be summed up in one sentence, " but faith which worketh by love."

1. The evidences of faith bending and operating towards God may be seen in acts of obedience to His commands. Not merely those commands which may be most congenial to our feelings, and convenient to our circumstances, but the whole catalogue of His moral requirements in respect both to this world and the world to come. Many people make a selection of the commandments which they observe, regardless of the violation of others. The constitution of their minds is such that some sins are no temptation to them, consequently to abstain from them is easy, whilst they may indulge in others equally bad without compunction. The same may be said of the performance of some commanded duties. They feel a natural pleasure in the act, there is therefore no difficulty felt in obeying the command. This is done, not from a principle of faith, but from a bias of the natural disposition. When the whole scope of forbidden sin and required duties is taken into consideration there is a disinclination to obedience. The torrents are not stemmed, temptations are not resisted, sacrifices are not made, self-denial is not exercised. But when the vitality of faith is felt there is a vigorous effort to abstain from sin—from *all* sin ; to observe duty—*every* duty. There is no reserve exercised, no obstacles raised, no excuse made. Life and energy are perceptible in every action. Every command in the decalogue, every duty inculcated in the Word of God, will be attentively observed. The lust of the flesh will be

mortified, every holy feeling will be called into action. Love to God actuating the mind, the whole soul and body will be consecrated to His service. His name will be revered, His Son will be adored, His Spirit will be sought, His Word will be valued, His Sabbath will be called a delight, His ordinances will be embraced, His providence will be admired, and the sentiment of the Psalmist will be fully adopted—"Thy statutes have been my delight in the house of my pilgrimage."

2. The evidences of faith operate also towards men. Our light shines not only *before* men, but *on* men, that they may not only *see* but *feel* our good works, and glorify our Father who is in heaven. There are acts of *justice* towards men which true faith never fails to practise. The consistent Christian would shun a deed of injustice as he would a plague. To wrong another is a principle of Satan, having derived its existence from him, and receiving its nutrition from him. Justice is an offspring of God, and they who are born of God aim at imitating their Father, who is just, holy, and true. There are again acts of *forgiveness* to be exercised towards men. We have much to forgive as well as to be forgiven, and our forgiving others is a constituted condition on which we are to expect forgiveness. Our Saviour insists upon this as the leading feature in the character of His followers, and the conditional ground of acceptance. In His memorable sermon on the mount He says, "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." There are also works of *charity* towards men. In imitation of the example of Christ, faith creates a feeling of compassion in the bosom of the Christian. He who went about doing good taught us to regard every man a neighbour, and to call every man a brother; when a neighbour is in distress, when a brother is in need, it is the work of faith to pity, to sympathize, and to relieve. Charitable institutions, asylums for the relief of the afflicted, schools for the instruction of the young, societies for the propagation of the Gospel will never need a friend whilst faith exercises its natural energies, and is not dead, like a body without the spirit.

These are some of the works of faith by which a man is justified before men, and are the evidences of his justification before God. Let us ask, in conclusion, what is the character of our faith? If it be an inoperative faith, wanting the action of a living body, then it is hateful to God, and useless to man. No believing without obedience will avail us; for though there can be no merit in our obedience that we should be saved by it, yet there is such a necessity of obedience that we shall never be saved without it. If, then, we profess to have faith, let it be proved by our good works.

The Twelfth Sunday after Trinity.

MORNING SERVICE.—Second Lesson : Acts xvii.

Verse 11.—“ *These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so.*”

PERSECUTIONS were great means for the spread of the Gospel in early times. They were not so by the intent of the promoters of the means, but by the overruling wisdom of Providence, in causing good to proceed out of evil. The devil and his votaries, with all their cunning and ingenuity, often commit great mistakes ; for the very means which they employ to further their own ends are so reversed as to damage and destroy their own cause. It was so especially at the introduction of Christianity into the world. They hurled their projectiles against the citadel of Christ, but the ramparts were so strong that they rebounded and made breaches in their own fortifications. When the apostles were scattered by persecution they had the opportunity of preaching the Gospel to different nations, when they were brought before tribunals facilities were offered to testify the truth in the presence of those occupying high stations of power, and when they were removed from prison to prison they had access to all classes of individuals.

Paul and Silas by being imprisoned at Philippi became the instruments of the jailer's conversion ; by fleeing from the persecution they entered the great city of Thessalonica, when some Jews, and “ a great multitude ” of devout Greeks, and chief women believed. The persecution at Thessalonica drove them forward until they arrived at Berea, a large city in the northern portion of Macedonia, where they met with a more

worthy reception from the inhabitants, who are highly commended for their nobleness of character and gentleness of manner. Those "were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind," but taking nothing for granted, they "searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so."

We have here, first, the honourable character given to the Bereans; secondly, in what did their nobleness consist; and thirdly, the means which they employed to form a just conclusion.

I. The honourable character given here to the Bereans. "Those were more noble than those in Thessalonica." The Jews everywhere boasted of their honourable descent from Abraham, but many of them showed themselves to be children unworthy of such a parent. Not so the Berean Jews; by their generous spirit and love of truth they manifested the temper of their ancestors, and proved themselves worthy of their descent from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Their nobility did not consist in any superiority of birth or rank, but in the qualities of their minds. They possessed greater candour, greater regard for the truth than did the inhabitants of Thessalonica, divesting themselves of unreasonable attachment to prepossessed opinions and prejudices. True nobility never consists in birth, nor in station, nor in wealth; these things are phantoms which inherit only a name, and do not influence the disposition and moral character of the inheritor. A coronet, or even a crown, may be placed on the head of one possessing a plebeian and despicable spirit, whilst another clothed in rags may possess a mind that would adorn a throne. Vulgarity and rudeness, churlishness and untractableness are often found amongst those who boast in their descent from kings, whilst nobleness and candour, ingenuousness and mildness are manifested in the dispositions of others who have no higher origin than the occupiers of huts, or perhaps a union house. Of whatever station a person may be, if he can look difficulties in the face without compromising the truth; if he

can listen to a fair statement of facts without any preconceived prejudices ; if he can forgive an injury without resenting it ; if he can devote his energies to the good of others without regard to his own convenience or advantage, is entitled to be called *noble*. "The soul is the standard of the man." The soul endowed with a feeling of rectitude ; the soul enriched with the principles of virtue ; the soul sympathizing with all that is lovely and of good report ; above all, the soul actuated by the maxims of true religion constitutes the real nobleness of earth. In one passage of Holy Scripture, written by St. James, we find all that can be possibly required to form the honourable character for which the Bereans were commended. "But the wisdom which is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy." Such nobility is from above, not of the earth, earthy ; they that possess it are "born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

We shall enquire—

II. In what did the nobleness of the Bereans consist ? We are told that it consisted "in that they received the word with all readiness of mind." There was a courtesy and respectfulness in their manner which won the admiration of men, and a commendation from God. This was manifested—

1. In an attentive audience to what was spoken. They were no listless, careless hearers of the words spoken, but they fixed their minds on the subject treated by the speakers, so that not a sentence or a word was lost upon them. What an example for the imitation of the hearers of the Gospel generally ? Alas ! too many come to a house of prayer, take their seats in the sanctuary of God, and kneel at the shrine of a Divine Being without paying the remotest attention to the worship in which they are supposed to be engaged. Like the seed in the parable of the sower, the word which is preached, as well as the prayers which are offered, fall on the way-side ; "the birds," in the shape of wandering thoughts, pick up the

grain, and allow it not to enter into the mind. If a striking illustration, or an interesting anecdote arrest the attention it is but for a moment, the subject intended to be illustrated is lost, the connecting matter passes by unheeded, and they retire from the sanctuary with disjointed ideas, if with any at all, and consequently they have realized no benefit in their spiritual devotions. Or if they have been delighted with the well-sung hymns, the well-read prayers, and the well-delivered discourse, the sound, and not the substance, touched their ears, and wrought upon their passions, but never entered their hearts. Is not this, brethren, a true picture of some of you, when coming to hear the Gospel? When the minister of God is labouring to impress upon your minds "the truth as it is in Jesus," is not the mind of one engrossed in the counting-house, of another in his place of business, and perhaps of some in the pleasures of sin and in the revelries of life? Thus being variously occupied instead of attending to the admonition of the wise man, "Keep thy foot when thou goest into the house of God, and be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools, for they consider not that they do evil."

2. The Bereans divested themselves of all prejudices when listening to the statements of Paul. What he taught them is here called "the word," by which we understand the Gospel in the same fulness as he preached it elsewhere, containing the life, the death, the resurrection, the ascension, and the intercession of Jesus of Nazareth as the true Messiah. All this was new doctrine to the Bereans, and adverse to their preconceived opinions of the worship of God; nevertheless, "they received the word with all readiness of mind," casting aside their previous notions of religious observances. The Mosaic ceremonial, the altar of brass, the annual and daily sacrifices, the washings and purifyings with water, and the outward observance of an ancient ritual were all sunk under the force of the newly-conceived conviction that "the word" was true, and of vital consequences. We can scarcely realize the difficulties with which these people had to contend in paying that ready attention to the preaching of Paul. We

may know something of the force of early training in the different forms of religion, and of the obstacles to surmount in arriving at the truth ; but to enter fully into their position we must follow the footsteps of the Christian missionary, say to India, and witness him contending with the prejudices of Brahminism. The votaries of that religion have been grounded in the creed of their ancestors, the customs of untold ages have rooted the sentiments in their minds, the praises of Brahma were the first to sound in their ears, their infant tongues were taught to lisp his name, his doctrines were blended with their education, they had been taught that he alone was supreme, and that to deny his authority was to lose caste, and would make them outcasts in the world. For such to renounce the sacred rites, and embrace a doctrine declared by a stranger's tongue would be an act of self-denial requiring a resolution stronger than man can support. Similar to this was the resolution of the Jews and proselytes of Berea when they cast aside the prejudices of Judaism, and embraced a form of religion which was then for the first time introduced to them.

8. They gave full credence to the testimony of the Gospel as it was preached by Paul. Not merely did they believe the facts, but they felt the power of "the word." This is implied by their receiving it with *all readiness of mind*. The Word of God carries a power with it which no attentive listener can resist. St. Paul himself felt this when he said, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." It is "quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." It was this power that pricked the three thousand to the heart on the day of Pentecost, that subdued the obstinate Jews and the superstitious Gentiles under the preaching of the apostles, that forced Saul of Tarsus to cry out, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do ?" and the jailer of Philippi, "What shall I do to be saved ?"

The same power still exists, and is felt by all believers, drawing them to embrace its doctrines, inducing them to comply with its invitations, teaching them to trust in the truth of its promises, and leading them to render obedience to its commands. The Bereans having experienced this power they gladly renounced their former practices, and devoted their lives to the requirements of the religion of Jesus. Believing, they rejoiced "with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

We observe—

III. The means which they employed to aid them in forming this just conclusion. They "Searched the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so." They took nothing for granted. Like men of wisdom they examined for themselves, they exercised deliberate consideration, and came to the conclusion, after mature thought. Religion ought not to be a matter of accident, its importance demands deliberation, its professors should examine for themselves, and endeavour to solve the following questions :—What is it ? where is it from ? who is its author ? what is its object ? and where does it lead ? This seems to have been the conduct of the Bereans, and these things prove their nobleness.

1. They went to the right source for information. *They searched the Scriptures.* They did not consult reason, or philosophy, or the records of heathenism. Paul had referred to the Divine Oracles, to those oracles they went, and compared prophecy with fulfilment, type with antitype, shadow with substance, knowing that if the doctrine were true it must be founded on the records of God. If we would ascertain the truth of the Christian religion, we must go to the proper source for evidences. It cannot be proved by a mathematical problem, or by a philosophical theory, or by the arguments of rationalism. "To the word and to the testimony" we must come, and first it is necessary that we should believe the testimony to be of God. If it were merely of man our research will be of no avail ; if the books of the Old and New Testaments be mere human compositions, our religion falls to the ground, for their contents can possibly be nothing but

speculative delusions. But being of God, their consistency establishes our faith. Christ being the Son of God became man, to atone for man's sin, and to save man from endless ruin, to which the Scriptures bear unanimous testimony which cannot be denied. This, then, is our chart, by this we steer our course, by this we must form our creed.

2. The Bereans were intent in their enquiry. "They searched the Scriptures!" It was not a mere cursory glance, they turned leaf after leaf, scanned page after page, examined line after line, weighed word after word. Nothing necessary for enquiry escaped their notice. The prophecies respecting the birth, life, work, sufferings, death, resurrection, and ascension of the expected Messiah were carefully entered into, and, comparing them with the history of Paul's Christ, they found a perfect correspondence. It is the lack of this diligent search that causes all the scepticisms and infidelity which exists in the world. A superficial reading of Scripture is like skimming the surface of the ocean to seek for the pearls. You may thus swim for ages and find nothing but water, but if you dive into the depth you will be rewarded for the effort.

3. The Bereans persevered in their search. "They searched the Scriptures *daily*." To them the subject involved too serious consequences to come to a hasty conclusion. Day after day with untiring patience they plied themselves to the task. The result was so satisfactory that we are told in the succeeding verse that "therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few." We may not find what we seek at once, but we are commanded to persevere and faint not. This holds good in enquiry, it holds good in prayer, it holds good in expecting the fulfilment of promises, it holds good in the exercise of all Christian graces. Success is certain if we persevere. It is worthy of trial, not only in ascertaining the reality of what we profess, but also in possessing a personal interest in the benefits which are guaranteed to those who believe. Let us, therefore, imitate the example of those noble Bereans, and search until we find, seek until we receive, knock until it be opened unto us.

The Twelfth Sunday after Trinity.

EVENING SERVICE.—First Lesson : 2 Kings xviii.

Verse 32.—“ *Until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of corn and wine, a land of bread and vineyards, a land of oil olive and of honey, that ye may live, and not die : and hearken not unto Hezekiah, when he persuadeth you, saying, The Lord will deliver us.*”

NATIONS as well as individuals are raised up by the Almighty for especial purposes. Some are raised up for the purposes of mercy, others for the purpose of judgment. Some to bless the world, others to punish the world. Those nations seem to be endowed with superior power during the period of their mission, and when that mission is accomplished the power is withdrawn and transferred to other hands. This we find to be the case with the Egyptians, with the Assyrians, with the Persians, with the Greeks, and with the Romans. Each nation had its day of supreme rule ; during that day it accomplished ends which no other nation was in a position to accomplish ; but the work having been done it sunk into insignificance and ruin. Happy is that nation which has been raised up as the honourable instrument of good, destined to advance the glory of God, to further the extension of the Church, and to promote the best interests of man. Such, we trust, is England in the present day ; being invested with unparalleled power, not for the aggrandisement of her own Sovereign and people, but for the honour of Him who holds the reins of government in His own hands. We believe that as long as England continues to defend the truth and discountenance error, to exalt virtue, and to subjugate vice, to disseminate the gospel, and dissipate heathenism, she will retain her pre-eminence amongst

the nations ; but as soon as she *will* manifest an indifference to those great objects, her sun will set, and like her predecessors she also shall fall into decay.

The Assyrians at the time when the circumstances recorded in this and the adjoining chapters occurred, were evidently in great power ; but they were stewards unworthy of the trust. They abused the power by pampering their own pride. They were allowed to conquer and enslave the ten tribes of Israel because they had forsaken the God of their fathers, and sunk into idolatry and sin. Encouraged by success the Assyrians invaded Judah, positively boasting that they would take the people into captivity, and reduce their city to ashes. The insulting and blasphemous language of Rabshakeh is an evidence of the haughty and vile disposition of the nation. The impudent blasphemy of this man's speech is without parallel ; he not only attempted to excite the Jews to sedition and revolt, but also defied the God in whom Hezekiah trusted. The King of Judah treated this speech as he ought : it was not properly directed against him, but against the Lord ; therefore he referred the matter to God himself, who was able to defend His own cause, and who in proof of the power of His indignation punished that blasphemy in the most signal manner. The text is a part of the hireling's speech which was well calculated to stir up a seditious spirit, trying to impress the people with the vanity of listening to the persuasions of their king to trust in the Lord, and to induce them to surrender to him with the promise that they should be well rewarded by being placed to dwell in a country as rich and fertile as their own. " Until I come and take you away to a land like your own land," &c.

There are two useful Christian morals to be deduced from this passage. First, that there are always seducers like Rabshakeh to dissuade people from trusting in the Lord. Secondly, that those seducers always back up their dissuasions by plausible promises. May God's Spirit enlighten our mind to see the fallacy of these seductions.

I. There are always seducers like Rabahakeh to dissuade people from trusting in the Lord.

1. We may regard the devil as the chief agent in those dissuasions. He was a seducer from the beginning, and always will be as long as man will be in a state of sinful corruption to present fuel to feed the flame. We cannot tell in what manner an evil spirit can act upon mind, but we know that as one mind possesses power to operate upon another, so an invisible spirit can influence spirit. It may be by tacit suggestions, so that thoughts unaccountably arise without any apparent outward inducement. Most generally external means are employed by way of temptation. Satan understands well the peculiar disposition of every mind, he suits the temptation to the disposition, thus influencing every person by "the sin which doth so easily beset" him. The temptation is first presented, then the craving is excited, until every responsibility is discarded, every tendency to good is crushed, every obligation is ejected, every thought of God is banished from the mind. In referring to Scripture we find that the devil is a "spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience"—that his wiles are sagacious—that his power is great to deceive—and that he goeth about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. His power is employed to encourage the evil and to destroy the good. The desire to do what is right, to trust in God, and to receive the Saviour, he attempts to crush in the bud. His language is in effect, "Hearken not unto Hezekiah, when he persuadeth you, saying, The Lord will deliver us."

2. Infidelity and its votaries dissuade people from trusting in the Lord. We are told by some that God is a myth, that religion is a delusion, that the world to come is a phantom, that heaven is a creation of disordered imagination, that hell is a bugbear to frighten silly people, that there is no reality except in the present, that man lives by chance and dies by fatality, that he is intended only for the gratification of his senses, and that he should enjoy all the pleasures he can

obtain during the term of his existence, for there is no hereafter of either pleasure or pain.

“Live whilst you live, the Epicure will say,
And drink the pleasures of the passing day.”

And what is this infidelity which is so dishonourable to God and so degrading to man? It is a tissue of gross inconsistencies that corrupt the mind and vitiate the practice. The plea of reason is advanced to support the soul-destroying system. Are you an infidel? Pause and think again. Reason! that which is the glory of our race, that which constitutes our birthright as moral agents, that which exalts man to the highest pinnacle in God's creation of mortals, to be prostituted and abused for such an infamous end! Impossible. Is it consistent with reason that a house should be built without a builder, that machinery should be constructed without an inventor, that a steam engine should work without a guiding hand? Is it consistent with reason that the physical world should observe the regularity of clockwork in the revolutions of bodies, and the succession of seasons without an intelligent conductor? Is it consistent with reason that man's body should take twenty years to grow into maturity merely for the existence of “threescore years and ten,” then to fall into endless ruin? Is it consistent with reason that a mind capable of grasping creation, making every element subservient to its own will, measuring accurately the dimensions of a star and the distance of a planet, finding its way to the antipodes without a single landmark, digging into the bowels of the earth to find fossils which supply it with volumes of ancient history that have been consigned for centuries to the shelves of subterranean libraries—being able to predict the future from comparison with the past, and after all that mind to be annihilated at death without any further consciousness? Oh! brethren, let not such a senseless system rob you of your birthright, making you to die like brutes after living like men for a few years upon earth, casting you into the midnight of eternal nothingness after enjoying

the daylight of rational intelligence. What does all its pernicious teaching imply but the blasphemous language of Rabshakeh, "Hearken not unto Hezekiah, when he persuadeth you, saying, The Lord will deliver us?"

3. The common practices of life tend to dissuade people from trusting in the Lord. We shall not now enter into the sinful habits so much indulged in by the great majority of mankind, practices that blunt the feelings, and deprive the mind of all thoughtful action; but even the lawful vocations of this world draw from God, and lead to the neglect of religious dependence. The man of the world, though he may be not an infidel in principle, and though he may have resolution enough to withstand many temptations, is still so engrossed in the transactions of time, that he scarcely ever thinks of his moral responsibility, or of his duty to obey and serve God. The cares of the statesman—the profession of the professional—the counting-house of the merchant—the works of the manufacturer—the stores of the tradesman—the workshop of the mechanic—the occupation of the labourer, including their results, distract the attention, and divert it from spiritual things, so that God is not in all the thoughts of such worldly men. If the Sabbath be spent in balancing accounts, instead of in the house of prayer—in reading the newspaper, instead of reading the Bible—in visiting or pleasure taking, instead of worshipping the Almighty; the soul is cheated of its true resting-place; dependence upon the Lord's deliverance is entirely ignored; death, judgment, and eternity are forgotten; there is no desire for Divine protection, the grovelling slavery of sense destroys the lofty aspirations of the Spirit after real substantial freedom; whilst all combine to whisper the wicked sentiment, "Hearken not unto Hezekiah, when he persuadeth you, saying, The Lord will deliver us."

4. Doubts respecting the promises and faithfulness of God may be mentioned among those blaspheming dissuaders. Too often those doubts arise where there is a sincere desire to trust in the Lord. Even the true believer is sometimes

assaulted by those enemies. They attack you in the closet and in the sanctuary, they oppress you in your public religious exercises, and in your private devotions. When afflictions, and disappointments, and reverses, and bereavements trouble you, those doubts will put forth their utmost energies to deprive you of the only comfort which you can possibly realize, which is, that God in Christ has engaged to be your friend, and will finally deliver you from all your trials. What was there to sustain the minds of Hezekiah and other pious Jews when the formidable army of Sennacherib surrounded their city, threatening them with immediate destruction, but the feeling that God was able to defend them, and rescue them from the calamity? It was this feeling Rabshakeh tried to suppress, knowing that if they relinquished their trust in Jehovah, they would sink into despair and fall an easy prey. As long as our trust is sustained, we can face the bitterest foes and deepest trials without dismay; but if we allow those doubts to shake our confidence, what is there to sustain the mind amid the trying scenes of life? the present is a maze of anxiety, the future is a labyrinth of uncertainty, we are sunk into the vortex of despair, and are crushed by the existing calamities. How many have given up all hopes under the assaults of doubts, and have been driven to the river, the cord, the pistol, or the razor, as the only means (delusive alas! as the mist of morning) presenting themselves to them to get rid of the down-sinking melancholy of the soul? Yes, those doubts are formidable. Rabshakeh is dissuading you from trusting in God, constantly reiterating the blasphemous language, "Hearken not unto Hezekiah, when he persuadeth you, saying, The Lord will deliver us."

We observe—

II. That those persuasions are always backed up by plausible promises. Rabshakeh's promises to the Jews were, a happy home, an abundance of provisions, a store of luxuries, and a long life. "Until I come and take you away to a land

like your own, a land of corn and wine, a land of bread and vineyards, a land of oil olive and honey, that ye may live, and not die." Thus he attempts to deceive them by a promise that an ample compensation would be realized for the act of rebellion against their king. When the devil tempted our first parents to transgress the commands of their Maker, he did it with the assurance, not only that God's threatening of death should not be inflicted, but also with the additional advantages of extended privileges. "Your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." In the like manner every tempter holds forth some spurious benefit to be realized by a compliance with the temptation. The wide-spread banquet of present enjoyments furnish inducements to disobedience and rebellion. Every act of sin carries with it the delusion of greater advantages than an act of obedience. The smiles of the world, the gratification of passion, and the pleasure of enjoyment, are the leading inducements to disobedience.

People are persuaded that the displeasures of the world would detract from their temporal prosperity, cloud their glory, and destroy the respect which their position in life might command. Being forsaken and despised by the influential and great, is too much for those who count honour and fame the chief object of life. To retain such favours in many instances involves a disregard of religious duties; many sacrifice the latter with the delusive impression that the favour of man counterbalances the favour of God.

The gratification of passion, either of lust or of revenge, seems to many to be an advantage worthy of their time and energies, in the indulgence of which, the fear of God is banished from the thoughts; and acts of rebellion against the authority of heaven are represented as trivial when compared with the satisfaction which this indulgence affords.

The pleasures of sensual habits also serve as inducements to alienate from God. The paths of life are strewn with flowers which invite the affections and captivate the thoughts. Every flower is painted with the most attractive hues, pro-

missing enjoyment so complete as heart can desire. The temptation holds in prospect "a land of corn and wine, a land of bread and vineyards, a land of oil olive and honey, that ye might live, and not die." It is thus the things of time divert the mind from the things of eternity.

But before we conclude, let us just draw a contrast between the two. You will at once perceive the worth of their respective claims upon your attention if you merely compare their nature and their duration. What is the nature of the advantages offered by the world? Ask Solomon, who realized them all, and he will tell you that "all is vanity and vexation of spirit." Does not your own experience corroborate the statement of Solomon? Have you ever found any promise of the advantages of time come up to your expectation? Have you ever procured a rose without a thorn? Have you not felt some disappointment in the most promising gratification? It is not so in the things of God. There is a reality here which yields substantial satisfaction. The ways of religion "are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." There is no thorn attached to the rose, no sorrow connected with the joy, no disappointment in the expectation, no remorse treading in the train of the enjoyment. And what of the duration of the advantages? Suppose you did realize all that is promised, how long is it to last? The fleeting shadow passes away not less quickly than those imaginary advantages: an hour, a day, a month, a year, at furthest threescore years and ten will terminate all; whereas the pleasures of religion are the pleasures of eternity. They will support you through life, sustain you in death, and you shall bask in their sunshine world without end. Amen.

The Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity.

MORNING SERVICE.—First Lesson : 2 Kings xix.

Verses 30, 31.—“*And the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah, shall yet again take root downward, and bear fruit upward. For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and they that escape out of Mount Zion ; the zeal of the Lord of hosts shall do this.*”

THIS was a precious promise given to the Jews in answer to the prayer of Hezekiah, when the army of Sennacherib, King of Assyria surrounded their city, threatening them with immediate destruction. We have seen how that proud monarch, flushed with his recent victories, exalted himself against God, blasphemously defying His authority, and impiously deriding His people. How fully was the declaration of the Psalmist verified in his case. “Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee ; the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.” He vainly thought that as he and his fathers had destroyed the surrounding nations, with their kings and their gods, Jerusalem and her king would fall an easy prey to his arms. How greatly he miscalculated the power of the Being whom he slighted when he put the words in the mouths of his messengers ; “Thus shall ye speak to Hezekiah, King of Judah, saying, Let not thy God in whom thou trusted deceive thee, saying, Jerusalem shall not be delivered into the hands of the King of Assyria.” If the gods of the nations could not deliver the people from the hands of his fathers, and if the King of Hamath, and the King of Arpad, and the King of the city of Sepharvaim, of Henah and Ivah, fell victims to his rage, the God in whom Hezekiah trusted was able to deliver, and to blast that boastful idolater with a

word of His mouth. If he could boast, "I have digged and drunk strange waters, and with the sole of my foot have I dried up all the rivers of besieged places," God could tell him, "But I know thy abode, and thy going out, and thy coming in, and thy rage against me. Because thy rage against me, and thy tumult is come up into mine ears, therefore I will put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest." God had not forsaken His people. If He allowed a portion of them to be punished for their sins, and suffered them to be carried into captivity, He was determined that a remnant of them should be saved, and that that remnant should "again take root downward, and bear fruit upward;" which He substantiates by the assurance, "For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and they that escape out of Mount Zion! the zeal of the Lord of hosts shall do this." Whilst this assurance was literally intended for the encouragement of the inhabitants of Jerusalem in the time of Hezekiah, securing them from the attacks of the King of Assyria; it may be applied to the Jews of later times, both when they were actually taken into captivity by a successor of Sennacherib—Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, and also when their city was destroyed by the army of the Emperor of Rome. In the former case they were remarkably preserved during the seventy years' term of their captivity until a remnant of them returned to their own land by the command of Cyrus, King of Persia and Media, when they again took root downward, and bore fruit upward. In the latter case, though thousands of them were destroyed, still a remnant of them escaped. They were scattered, it is true, but not annihilated. To this very day they exist a distinct nation, living amongst, but not mingling with, the various other nations of the earth. We have it declared by prophets, and assured by our inspired apostle, that they shall be some day restored, if not to their ancient land, certainly into the pale of God's Church upon earth. St. Paul, with a zeal peculiar to himself, asks the question, "Hath God cast away his

people?" and answers in the negative, "God forbid." Then after explaining to the Romans why they were partially rejected, he says, "that blindness in part is happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in," when they with the Gentiles shall be brought into one fold, having one Shepherd—the spiritual David who is to govern them.

The text may be also applied to God's people of every nation and age. Attempts have been made, and are made to destroy them, but a remnant still escapes to take root downward, and bear fruit upward, which may be proved by the history of the Christian world, and by the fact of the flourishing state of the Christian Church in the present day.

Taking this view of the subject, we shall First, regard the peculiar term employed in the text to designate God's people; Secondly, the assurance given of the preservation of those people notwithstanding the attempts made to destroy them; and Thirdly, the reason for their escape.

I. The peculiar term employed in the text to designate God's people "a remnant." The word remnant signifies the portion which remains after other portions are taken away. It is sometimes applied to the refuse of materials which may be regarded as worthless in proportion to the value set upon the whole; at other times the remnant is regarded of equal value in proportion to its bulk, with the part removed; and at other times the remnant is regarded the most valuable portion, as it is the only part which contains real worth. It is thus applied to minerals when crushed, and washed, and smelted, the useless appendages being carried away by the process, and the real metal only being left behind for the owner's acceptance. It is in this latter sense it is employed in reference to God's people. The word is so frequently used in Scripture in this sense, that we can scarcely make a selection. The prophet Isaiah, speaking of the corruptions of Israel, and the destructive desolations consequent thereon, says, "Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been as

Gomorrah." When the dross amongst the people had been taken away, that were like the worthless appendages attached to metals; he says in another place, "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the remnant of Israel, and such as are escaped of the house of Jacob, shall no more stay upon him that smote them; but shall stay upon the Lord, the holy one of Israel in truth. The remnant shall return, even the remnant of Jacob, unto the mighty God." The remnant may be "very small and feeble," but it shall be regarded as the peculiar treasure of the owner, and shall be defended by Him with a jealous care. Jeremiah assures us, that "the Lord said, Verily it shall be well with the remnant," for He has engaged to "gather the remnant of his flock, out of all countries whither," he says, "I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds, and they shall be fruitful and increase." The prophet Micah takes courage in the prospect of the surrounding desolations, and boldly asks, "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgressions of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy." The apostle Paul also felt confident that "a remnant should be saved," and that "there is a remnant according to the election of grace." In all these, as well as many other instances, the *remnant* signifies the most valuable portion of the whole. The term is applicable to God's people, when we consider—

1. Their fewness in proportion to others. Some one, wondering at our Saviour's teaching, asked the question, "Lord, are there *few* that be saved?" This might have been naturally inferred from some of His sayings. When admonishing His hearers to enter into the strait gate, He told them, "Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and *few* there be that find it." On another occasion He said, "So the last shall be first, and the first last; for many be called, but *few* chosen." He did not satisfy the question here with a direct answer, but replied, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto

you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." We cannot speculate respecting the greater or smaller number that shall be saved at the end of time, but judging from the past we know that hitherto the people of God have been comparatively few in proportion to the masses who have disregarded His laws, and forsaken His ways. As the children of Israel pitching before their enemies, "were like two little flocks of kids," while the "Syrians filled the country," so have the true Israelites been in every age, when placed in contrast with the millions of others. Noah only was righteous among the antediluvians. Abraham alone was faithful among his idolatrous contemporaries. Lot only was grieved at the wicked conduct of the inhabitants of the plain. In Abijah only there was "found some good things toward the Lord God of Israel, in the house of Jeroboam." Elijah felt that he was left alone in all Israel to worship God. We read of only Daniel and his three fellow-captives worshipping God in Babylon. Our Saviour had only twelve disciples, and one of them was "a devil." The Hebrew nation (provided they were all good), were the "fewest of all nations." What became of all the other numerous nations of the earth? We know not. Trace the history of the world, and you will find that by far the greatest number in every age have lived without "hope, and without God in the world." Even in our own highly-favoured nation, in the nineteenth century of the Christian era, the great mass is profanely ignorant of God. Look at the promiscuous inhabitants of a large town; study the character of those whom you meet travelling in railway carriages, you must come to the conclusion from their frivolity and profane language, that the great majority fear not the Lord. Sincere Christians are yet but a remnant; God grant that their numbers may increase!

2. Regarding God's people in the light of purified metal, we notice that as a remnant they are peculiarly valued. Perhaps not by the thoughtless and frivolous world, but by One in whose estimate the greatest confidence can be placed, and to whose opinion the greatest importance is to be attached.

To be highly esteemed of God is the most exalted position to which mortal man can aspire, and He has declared that He regards His people as His greatest treasure, His peculiar choice. Never did a miser watch over his gold with so much care and attention, as God watches over those who love Him. Everything proves this. The pains which He has taken with them, the provisions which He has made for them, the sacrifices which He has effected in their behalf, the gifts which He has bestowed upon them, the attention which He has paid to them, and the care which He has exercised over them, all testify how highly He appreciates them. One passage from St. Paul is sufficient to show this, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all; how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" The remnant has been so precious to Him, that even the life of His Son was not regarded as too great a sacrifice to be made for them.

Let us —

II. Notice the assurance given of the preservation of this remnant, notwithstanding the attempts made to destroy it. "For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and they that escape out of Zion, and the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah shall yet again take root downward, and bear fruit upward." This may be regarded as a positive promise that in spite of all opposition the nation should be preserved. It proved true in the case of the Jews; they were never entirely taken from Jerusalem and Mount Zion until the end of their dispensation; for when the army of Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the city, and took the greater portion of the inhabitants into captivity, there were some left. They were indeed of the poorest in the land, still they were a remnant. Though that remnant faithlessly rebelled and went down to Egypt, yet some of them returned and continued in the land until their brethren returned from Babylon. Some have thought that the expression "*out of Jerusalem and out of Mount Zion*" has a reference to the going forth of the

apostles to preach the gospel. The gospel was first preached at Jerusalem in obedience to the command of Christ ; thence it issued forth like streams in the desert to benefit and to fertilize the Gentile world.

The Jerusalem and Mount Zion of the New Testament are the Church of Christ. Hence a remnant has always gone forth from its first establishment to the present. The expression of the text implies first, perpetuity, and secondly, fertility.

1. Perpetuity. "For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant ; and they that escape out of Mount Zion." There is a fact connected with this promise worthy of our attention ; it is this, never has persecution diminished the number of God's people. Under the persecutions in Egypt the Israelites increased instead of decreased. Under the persecutions of the Jews the disciples of Jesus of Nazareth became daily more numerous. Under the persecutions of the Roman Emperors the Christians increased a thousand fold. Under the persecutions of the Papists Protestants filled the land. How true the saying, "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church." The more of them that were put to death, still greater did their numbers increase. Persecution feeds the flame of devotion, and gives life and energy to the suffering remnant. True Christians became few in the dark middle ages of our era, but why ? it was not through persecution, but through the criminal indifference and the fatal corruptions of Christians themselves. The perpetuity of the Church is secure as long as the members of the Church will adhere to the principles which they profess. As God promised the Rechabites, "Jonadab, the son of Bechab, shall not want a man to stand before me for ever," so He promises the Church that the "gates of hell shall not prevail against her." "Out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant."

2. Fertility is here promised. The remnant shall "take root downward, and bear fruit upward." In this fertility is involved an established safety as well as productive results. As the tree, striking its roots into the soil, firmly grasping

the strength of its support, can withstand the blast of a raging tempest, so God's people are rooted and grounded in His promises, and they firmly lay hold of His strength. Being thus rooted downward, they bear fruit upward, which is love to God, repentance for sin, faith in Christ, obedience to the Divine will, holiness of life, and goodness towards man. The fruit of the Spirit is the fruit borne by the remnant, which is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, goodness, faith, temperance. Such fruit grows upward, and shall ripen in heaven, whilst here it is manifest to the world. If we be the people of God men see our good works and glorify our Father who is in heaven !

We shall consider—

III. The reason for all this. "The zeal of the Lord of Hosts shall do this." Salvation belongeth unto the Lord. There is no escape, no security, no fruitfulness but by Him. By the zeal of the Lord of Hosts we are to understand the interest which He feels in the welfare of His own people, and the readiness which He manifests in furthering their safety. We have already spoken of His interest in them, and everything declares His readiness to help and defend them. He is never an inattentive observer of their position and circumstances ; but with a feeling unparalleled in any other being, and with a power which none other can exercise, He acts in their behalf. In the manifestation of his zeal He has given them great and precious promises, which "are all yea and amen in Christ Jesus." He has confirmed His promises with an oath, "that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." If His promise will not assure us of His zeal His oath surely must, for "an oath for confirmation is to *(men)* an end of all strife," and God "is not man that He should lie, nor the son of man that He should repent." What need we further witnesses ? Let us take His word and His oath. Let us trust in Him. If none other can save us, He

can ; if none other will succour us, He will ; if none other is able to subdue our enemies, He is. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower ; the righteous runneth into it and is safe." He will not forsake his people. The zeal which He manifests is the "zeal of the Lord of Hosts." It is not like man's zeal, which changes, and often entirely fails ; it is the zeal of an unchangeable God, who is the "same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

The Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity.

EVENING SERVICE.—Second Lesson : 1 John iii.

Verse 1. — “ *Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.*”

THE title Boanerges was given by our Lord to St. John, in conjunction with St. James, not because he was disposed to thunder the curses of the law against his hearers, but because he exercised a power which crushed their feelings and changed their hearts. The characteristic feature of John's disposition was love, which endeared him especially to Christ during their sojourning together upon earth, and which characterized his teaching after the departure of Christ to heaven. It is said that when age and infirmity grew upon him at Ephesus, so that he could no longer preach to the people, he used, at every public meeting, to be led to the church, when he would say no more to them than “ Little children, love one another :” and being asked by his auditors, why he always spoke in the same strain, he answered, “ because it was the command of our Lord ; and that, if they did nothing more, this alone was sufficient as a proof of their Christianity.” Actuated by a feeling of love, he was distinguished for his zeal and earnestness in sounding forth the doctrines of the gospel, and in defending the claims of the truth against the intruding heresies of the time ; and his history shows with what victorious and irresistible power he would bear down all opposition, confounding the enemies of the gospel with the divine eloquence, and the mighty miracles which accompanied his ministry.

In this chapter, the apostle enjoins upon Christians the special duty of love to God, and to each other, which he

enforces by its being an old commandment, encouraged by new motives and new examples. The motives would be the distinctive relationship between all with God in Christ, and between all with each other as the children of the same Father by the gracious operation of the same Spirit in removing the darkness from their minds, and placing them in the true light. The examples would be the loving devotedness of Christ in dying to atone for their sins, and in interceding as their Advocate in heaven. Also, the love of God in accepting the work of the Son for them, and in adopting them to be His own children. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God."

The text suggests, first, the honourable distinction conferred upon Christians; and secondly, the admired cause of that distinction.

I. There is the honourable distinction conferred upon Christians, "That we should be called the sons of God."

The things which are generally considered to be the prizes of the world are those connected with high positions in Church and State. To be exalted from a low station either by merit or good fortune to a rank of royalty or nobility, distinguishes a person in the estimation of his fellowmen, and wins for him the plaudits of the millions. To be born of royal or noble blood secures honour, independent of character. But those things are shaded into midnight darkness when contrasted with the distinguished position of those who are "called the sons of God." Their rank is not of the earth earthy; their origin is derived from a higher source than that of being heir to the most exalted seat in life: being "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." This distinction consists not merely of creation and providence; according to such an act, all are the sons of God. He is the Creator of all, the Preserver of all. In this respect the profane, the vile, the wicked, the infidel portions of mankind are equally the sons

of God. True Christians are so in a special manner, which includes an act of regeneration, and an act of adoption. In both those acts it is intimated that none are by nature the sons of God in this sense. St. Paul, in writing to the Ephesian Christians, declares that they were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. They "were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers from the covenants of the promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." So were we, so were all. None have a natural claim to the honoured title, "the sons of God." The Jews thought *they* had by virtue of their descent from Abraham; but they were convinced of their error when Christ told them, "Ye are of your father the devil." The privilege is therefore conferred by an act of unmerited grace regenerating the soul, and adopting the person into the family of God.

There are three things contained in this distinguished character. First, the implantation of a new nature in the soul; secondly, a title to all the privileges of children; and, thirdly, an heirship to an inheritance by virtue of the position.

1. There is a new nature implanted in the soul. Believers are made partakers of the divine nature: not, indeed, in the essence of it, but in the gracious qualities of it, which enables them to resemble, in some measure, God, their Father. They receive a principle of spiritual life from God,—an inward, universal, abiding principle leading to God, and living for God. This principle exalts them to the same relation that Christ possesses. "I ascend to my Father, and your Father." There is, indeed, a diversity in the foundation of it. Christ is a Son by nature, they by favour. He possesses the essence, they possess the quality; He by generation, they by regeneration; He by descent, they by adoption. Still, so near is the relationship instituted by this implanted nature that they are taught to call Him "Brother," and address God as common Father. Then, brethren, when this principle is implanted there is a new life, there are new energies, there are new desires, there are new aspirations, there are

new prospects possessed by the soul. "Old things are passed away; behold all things are become new." The man is a thorough new creature, being translated "from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." Sin is no longer his delight; the love of Christ constraineth him to seek holiness, and to live in the fear of God. The plague-spot disappears, like Naaman the Syrian, by washing in Jordan; the leprosy is cleansed, and his flesh becomes as the flesh of a little child.

2. There is a title to all the privileges of children. The distinction of a child from a stranger in the family is marked by the peculiar claims which the former has on the affections and care of the father. No stranger can presume to be inducted into the same confidence, nor to be regarded with the same marks of affection. In the family of God, the sons are privileged with access to the Father, having the liberty to approach Him at all seasons, and under all circumstances. Unlike some fathers upon earth, there is no moroseness of temper, or dignity of manner forbidding access to His children, except when He condescends to send a special message, commanding them to appear in His presence. No: there is nothing of this. He has given a free licence to every child to approach Him without reserve. Safety under His protection—special teaching—paternal correction—gracious superintendence—the service of angels—relief in difficulties and comfort in distress—pardon for every sin—grace to help in every time of need—an assurance of a Friend in death—and everlasting happiness in the world to come—are portions of the privileges vouchsafed to the members of His family. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him."

3. There is an heirship to an eternal inheritance by virtue of this position. "If children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." If Christ be heir of all things, he also "that overcometh shall inherit all things." He, as the elder Brother, is to have the pre-eminence in all things, but

all the sons in their degree and measure are joint heirs with Him. His God and Father is their God and Father. The Father loves them as He loved Him. He gives them the glory which the Father gave Him. In the resurrection they shall have bodies fashioned like unto His glorious body. When He shall judge the quick and the dead, they shall judge the world. Where He is, there shall they be also with Him. They shall enter into the joy of their Lord, and sit with Him on His throne. Now are they the sons of God, and now are they heirs: they are to inherit the earth: they are called heirs of the grace of life: heirs of the righteousness which is of faith: heirs of salvation; heirs of the promise; heirs of the kingdom; all things are theirs. They have a covenanted right to all the necessary mercies of life; they are blessed with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places; and they have the prospect of "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for them." Such are the inestimable privileges of those who are "called the sons of God."

We come to observe—

II. The admired cause of this distinction. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us." God's love is the original cause of all good. "The good that is done upon earth He doeth it Himself." The fountain whence flows every good and perfect gift is the source of our regeneration and adoption. Independently of this there could be no renewed nature, no transfer of the stranger and foreigner to be the fellow-citizen of the saints and of the household of God. Our apostle looks upon the fact with wonder and admiration, and calls peculiar attention to the astonishing goodness and condescension of Almighty God that strangers and enemies should be dignified with the honourable distinction and amiable title of His sons. Such condescending love is unknown to history, is unprecedented in the recorded annals of the world. It was a rare condescension in Pharaoh's daughter to rescue Moses, an innocent

and forsaken stranger, from perishing in the water, and to adopt him for her son; but O! how much greater was that love which rescued guilty and wretched man from eternal flames, and instituted a rebel a member of the Divine family. The extent of this love cannot be explained; but it must be estimated by comparison. What *manner* of love! It can be of no ordinary nature, of no every-day occurrence.

Love may be regarded as being of three descriptions: there is the *passion* of love; there is the *principle* of love; and there is the *essence* of love.

1. There is the *passion* of love, which is that felt by persons towards the objects of their choice. Such a love is arbitrary, and is generally excited by some real or imaginary virtue in the object. Rarely would you love an object unless you fancied that it possessed some ingredients of attraction. You love a person or thing, because that person or thing wins your affection by something that attracts your attention and fixes your choice. Such love fluctuates with time, distance, and circumstances. One day it glows with ardent fervour, another day it sinks into frigid coldness. A single act, a single word, or even a single look will affect it; and there are instances when it is turned into perfect hatred. This is the ordinary love of the world, which has much of the animal feeling in it, and cannot be depended upon.

2. There is the *principle* of love, which is of a higher order, and may be regarded as the most sublime feeling possessed by mortals, or any finite beings. It is not subject to changes as the love of passion; being grounded in the heart, it weathers the fluctuations of circumstances; it stands the ordeal of disappointments; it bears up under the infliction of injuries, and it hides a multitude of sins. Such is the love of a parent towards the child; though that child may prove undutiful and rebellious by his ungrateful returns of evil for good; he may have caused many bitter pangs of grief; he may have forsaken the parental roof and wandered to a distant land; like the prodigal son he may have spent all his substance in riotous living; he may have calumniated his

father, and drawn dishonour on his name; but should he at length relent and return to his home, he will find the parent's love unchanged. He followed him in mental agony through all his wanderings, and with all his faults he loved him still. Such a love as this is that of the true believer, which in its exercise towards his Saviour and fellow-believer changes not. It is pure, disinterested love; angelic in its nature, soothing in its influence, "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." It will endure fatigue, undergo inconveniences, surmount difficulties, make sacrifices. The chains of a dungeon cannot bind it, the stake cannot quench it, the flame cannot burn it, death cannot destroy it. Like a particular garden herb, the more it be trampled upon, the more luxuriantly will it flourish; or, like oil poured on the fire, persecution only feeds the flame.

3. There is, however, a love different from either of these, and that is love in *essence*. This is the love which "the Father hath bestowed upon us." Its "manner" is different from all others. It is not the love of passion, nor the love of principle, but it is the very Being of God Himself. God and His love are identical, they cannot be disjoined. Were you to ask me, what God is, I should answer with St. John in the following chapter, "God is love." It is His very existence, without it there is no God. You form your idea of ocean. Of what is the ocean composed? It is composed of water: without water there would be no ocean; you cannot disjoin it from the idea of water; water here, water there, water everywhere. Whatever else may exist in it—and there are objects innumerable; rocks exist in it, pearls are found in it, millions of breathing beings live in it, islands grow in it—but the ocean itself is water. In God exist all the riches and glorious qualities of heaven and earth; but God Himself is love: love here, love there, love everywhere. When, therefore, it is asked, "What manner of love?" it is the same as to say God has bestowed Himself upon us. Yes, brethren, He has bestowed Himself in the person of His Son, without which bestowment it would

have been an utter impossibility that any of the sons of men should be called the sons of God. We cannot, therefore, be surprised that St. John reflects upon the subject with astonishment, and calls universal attention to its stupendous greatness. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." Can we think of the fact without

"Wonder, love, and praises?"

In conclusion, let us ask ourselves the question whether we have a right to claim this distinguished title? If we have, we are a happy people : all things are ours, God is our Father, Christ is our Brother, the angels are our guardians, providence is our foster-mother, this world is an apartment for our accommodation, heaven is our home, where exists the centre of all our future happiness. But then, we must not forget our obligations ; if we be sons, we must be dutiful and obedient, remembering that a father has claims which the child dares not withhold. God has claims to our love, to our obedience, to our service, to our souls, to our all.

The Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity.

MORNING SERVICE.—Second Lesson: Matthew iii.

Verse 12.—“ *Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.*”

THE great beauty of Scripture is its simplicity. It illustrates God, and Christ, and the Church, and ourselves, and heaven, and hell in language so adapted to our capacities that we cannot fail to be impressed with its truth, although we may not be fully conscious of its power. John the Baptist, as his great successor, carried out in his ministry the uniform style of simple illustration, some of which we find in the text. Here we have a representation of Christ, of His Church, of man, of heaven, and of hell. Christ is represented as a husbandman, whose office is to thrash, fan, and winnow his corn to separate it from the chaff, preserving the one, and consuming the other. The Church is represented as a floor containing a mixture of grain and straw, of corn and chaff, of wheat and tares, of good seed and darnel. Man is represented as being of one kind or the other. Heaven is represented as a garner in which the pure grain shall be deposited; and hell is represented as the process of destruction whereby the chaff shall be consumed. Rarely do we meet with a passage of Scripture in which so much is contained in so few words, every sentence being of vital importance, and every word involving a meaning of eternal consequence.

Let us briefly, by the help of God's Spirit, investigate the subjects which are here forced upon our notice, and apply the conclusion to our own practical benefit. We may regard, first, the characters described; secondly, the act performed; and thirdly, the consequences declared.

I. We shall regard the characters described. The "wheat" and the "chaff." The terms are intended to denote two classes of individuals, who are for a time united, but to be ultimately separated. By the wheat true believers are intended, and by the chaff hypocrites in the Church of Christ.

1. The wheat represents true believers, which is an appropriate emblem on account of its mode of production, its preciousness, and its utility. Wheat is not natural to the soil ; it does not grow indigenously like cockle or darnel, without any preparation or trouble. There must be a deposit of seed, which must be seasonably sown and carefully nurtured ; neither is it instantaneously matured ; it takes time to germinate, and it increases gradually, first the blade, then the stalk, then the ear, and then the full corn in the ear. The shower and the sunshine are absolute to its growth and maturity ; weeks and months must witness its progress before it is even fit for the floor. No person is born a Christian ; the Church is not the natural soil of man ; the pernicious weeds of sin flourish luxuriantly in his heart without any cultivation or pains-taking, but to make him grow in the Church the seed of Divine grace must be sown within, the principles of the Gospel must be implanted in the soul. The heavenly showers and the sunshine of spiritual influences must foster the stalk and fructify the ear. Then the preciousness and utility of the wheat impresses us with the corresponding value of true believers. It is the "staff of life," without it existence would be misery, and would be of short duration. In its absence everything else would be worthless. If a man were cast on a barren island, could he collect around him all the gold and pearls of creation, they would be mere dross if he had not this article to sustain life. The Egyptians willingly gave up their money, their cattle, their land, and their liberty to Joseph for the corn which he had provided for the time of famine. Ten righteous men in Sodom would have saved the whole cities of the plain. The influence of one prophet saved Samaria. God's people are precious in His sight, and for their sakes He preserves the world. Their prayers, their

influence, their example are of more value to a nation than all its wealth and all its forces. The heathen Saxon king feared a handful of praying Christians more than all the power of the British army. The Christianity of England is the secret of its safety and prosperity; God blesses her increase, in answer to the prayers of her believing children. They may be often despised and forsaken by the men of the world, but were they removed England and the world would sink.

2. There is chaff as well as wheat, it grows together with the wheat, and is mixed up with it even in the floor. By the chaff hypocrites are intended, who are combined with believers in the Church; all those who have only a show of religion without its principles and good works, resting only on the rites and ceremonies of its outward communion, are chaff amongst the wheat. There never was wheat without chaff, there never was a church upon earth without hypocrites. Soon after the Church was turned out of the garden of Eden there appeared the chaff in the person of Cain. When reduced to the number of eight in the Ark of Noah, the chaff existed even there in the person of Ham. Follow its history through the patriarchal and Mosaic dispensations you will find a great number of melancholy instances given of the presence of the chaff. The few who composed the New Testament Church, and under the eye of the Husbandman Himself, were not free from it. There was one amongst the twelve who (Christ told His followers) was "a devil," and in the earliest days of apostolical prosperity, even during the fervour of Pentecostal influence, Ananias and Sapphira, Simon Magus, and Demas are especially mentioned as being the refuse of the thrashing-floor. God only knows, if the Church were sifted in our day as it has been in former ages, what proportion there may be of believers and hypocrites; but this we know for our encouragement and comfort, that the very presence of chaff proves there is wheat; it could not otherwise be produced. As a counterfeit is a proof of the existence of true coin, so a hypocrite is a proof of the existence of a true Christian Church. Considering the corruption of human

nature, and the variety of motives which actuates it, we ought to "thank God and take courage" that any are found to be true, substantial wheat.

II. We find here an act performed by the Husbandman. "Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor." It is an act of warning and an act of encouragement—of warning to hypocrites, of encouragement to believers. The fan is either an instrument which is employed to produce an artificial wind strong enough to separate the lighter material from the grain, but not sufficiently strong to carry away the grain itself; or it may mean a kind of shovel by which the whole contents of the floor is thrown up so that the natural wind might detach the one from the other; in either case it means a thorough separation of the chaff from the wheat, and a thorough cleansing of the floor.

The Baptist evidently meant that the ministry of the Messiah would be so powerful, trying, searching, and purifying, that, whilst multitudes should be converted, those who were not true penitents should be driven away by the force of the trial.

Christ's means of purifying His floor, or His Church, may be classified into three acts, operating separately, but producing combined results.

1. He will purge His floor by the doctrines which He will teach. Probably John referred partly to this when he uttered the sentiments of the text. His Successor would by His teaching purify the Church from all the false Jewish notions of the virtue of a natural descent from Abraham, as well as from human traditions, and dependence upon outward rites and ceremonies as means of acceptance with God. This was the substance of His teaching at the well of Jacob, when He told the woman of Samaria that no hypocritical observance of rites, neither in Jerusalem nor in that mountain, could substitute the true worship of the Father; for God being a Spirit, "they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." The teaching of Christ tested the character of His

hearers. So searching to the feelings, so trying to the carnal mind, so probing to the conscience were His doctrines, that but few believed in Him, whilst the crowds "were offended at him," and went away saying, "This is a hard saying, who can hear it?" When He told the rich youth, "Go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come and follow me," he went away sorrowful. When He told the Jews, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me," they were ashamed of Him. His followers, therefore, were few, His floor was thoroughly purged. When the apostles afterwards preached the same doctrines, they were "to the Jews a stumblingblock, and to the Greeks foolishness;" and to this day the searching truth of the Gospel produces the same effect on the unregenerated mind. Human pride cannot stand the fan—it drives away self, which like chaff shrinks from the ordeal.

2. The floor is purged by the persecutions which are raised in opposition to true religion. Never is the Church more replete with solid wheat, and more free from useless chaff than under circumstances of fierce persecutions. It was so under the persecutions of the Jews in apostolic times, when the disciples met in upper rooms for fear of the Jews. It was so under the persecutions of the Roman Emperors, when they met in caves and forests. It was so under the persecutions of the Papists after the Reformation. It would be so now if such a fanning should take place—persecutions clear the floor of the chaff. The hypocrite loves the smiles, but cannot stand the frowns of the world; the believer only can brave the storm, breast the tempest, and stem the torrent.

8. The great purifying of the floor will take place at the day of judgment. We have already stated that never was the Church upon earth without hypocrites, and, it is to be feared, that it never will until the great fanning day shall arrive, when the sifting will be universal and complete. It shall be then, "He will thoroughly purge his floor." The winnowing wind will then be so searching that no crevice shall

escape. The wheat shall then be cleansed, not only from the hypocritical chaff connected with it, but also from all the remaining impurities and imperfections which are now attached to itself. Then shall Christ present His Church "to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." "He will throughly purge his floor."

III. The consequences of this shall be that "He will gather his wheat into the garner, but he will burn the chaff with unquenchable fire." Observe, *His* wheat, but *the* chaff. He will claim the wheat as His own, with the chaff He will have no connection.

1. The safety of the wheat. "He will gather his wheat into his garner." The garner, or the granary, is the place of deposit for the winnowed grain, where it is kept both for security and purity. The righteous are taken to heaven, where Christ is gone to prepare a place for them, and whence He will come again and take them to Himself, that where He is, they may be also. It is a place of security for both soul and body, where no outward foe, nor inward remorse, nor anxiety shall assault the soul, and where no pain nor infirmity shall afflict the body. Heaven is a place of rest—of peaceful, holy, happy rest. There the wicked shall cease from troubling, and the weary shall be at rest. More safe shall you be in the eternal garner than Noah was in the Ark during the deluge, or than the manslayer was in the city of refuge from the avenger of blood. It will be also a place of purity; nothing that defileth can enter there. "He that is holy shall be holy still." What a glorious prospect to those who are here assailed by temptations, and vexed by sin! There all the turmoils of life shall have passed, and no fear for the return of sorrow shall exist.

2. There is another phase given to the subject in the text; whilst the wheat shall be deposited in the garner, "He will burn the chaff with unquenchable fire." The chaff is for a time very near the wheat, and may shield it from the storm;

but it is unsubstantial, void, fruitless, and worthless, easily borne away by the wind, and the end of which is destruction. The phrase shews the utter destruction and misery of the ungodly in the world to come. They may stand prominently forth, and, like the chaff, be first seen in this life, but in the next their lot is not to be envied. They are often represented in Scripture as being "driven away like chaff before the wind," and like "chaff which the fire consumeth." The image of fire is employed to express the extreme misery that shall be endured; and the term unquenchable is used to express the eternal duration of their torments. "The smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever." The image of fire may be figurative language intended to represent the greatness of the pains inflicted, but you may rest assured that no natural fire can cause the extent of suffering which shall be endured by the lost in hell. As to any termination you may as well expect to escape from yourself as to think of existing without suffering. Is the soul immortal? then immortal shall be its pains. The one cannot be disjoined from the other in the world of spirits. "He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

The conclusion of the whole matter is that in the Church on earth there is, and will be, a mixture of good and bad, of saints and sinners, of true believers and hypocrites; but that Christ will ultimately purge His floor, yes, *purge* it, but not *break it up*; purge out its corruptions, but not destroy its existence. The fan which shall purify the floor shall drive away the chaff so that it shall no longer combine with the wheat. This, brethren, is a solemn subject, which ought to make us think, and ask what position do we hold in the floor? The results of the future depend entirely upon the state of the present. "He that is unjust let him be unjust still; and he that is filthy let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous let him be righteous still; and he that is holy let him be holy still."

The Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity.

EVENING SERVICE.—First Lesson : Jeremiah xxii.

Verse 29.—“ *O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord.*”

ALL God's works are worthy of notice ; but when He performs a special act, special attention is drawn to it that its importance might be seen and felt. The text is a summons to command more than ordinary attention to some extraordinary transactions which are brought before us in this Lesson. The contents of the chapter have reference to four of the Kings of Judah, namely, to Josiah who was dead, to Jehoahaz who had been taken into captivity in Egypt, to Jehoiakim who was then sitting upon the throne, and to Jeconiah who was to succeed him. The death of the good King Josiah was the cause of great grief to the people of Jerusalem, for we are told in the Second Book of Chronicles that they made lamentations for him, in which Jeremiah joined. The loss of good kings and of all good people is a source of grief as they are taken away from the evils to come, and few of those who succeed them tread in their footsteps. God, however, tells the people here, “ Weep not for the dead (Josiah) neither bemoan him, but weep for him that goeth away, for he shall return no more, nor see his native country,” meaning his successors. Those successors did not imitate the example of Josiah, therefore they are here denounced and threatened with inevitable punishment. Though they had been exalted to a state so flourishing as Gilead was fertile, and so powerful as the head of Lebanon was strong ; though they might build their houses of cedar wood, painted with vermilion, living in luxury, adorning their houses with costly ornaments, and thinking themselves impregnable in their

enclosed houses, yet nothing should save them from the inroads of their enemies, and from the judgment due for their sins. People may flatter themselves that they are safe in a course of sin, although they are daily warned of their danger. But "hitherto shalt thou go and no further;" there are limits to God's patience protracted as it may be, and when His long suffering is exhausted no power upon earth can prevent the punishment. Those wicked kings would not believe the denunciations made against them through the prophet Jeremiah, notwithstanding the declarations being confirmed by God's own oath, therefore He calls upon all to witness the accomplishment of His threatenings that they may know He is not a man to lie, nor the son of man to repent. "O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord." The issue is of so great a consequence that it is worthy of being placed on record for the inspection of future generations, and for the combined consideration of all nations that the whole world may know how consistent God's works are with His word. The thrice repeated summons is intended to render the fact more forcible and emphatic.

The subject therefore to which we shall now direct your notice is the consistency of God's acts with His declarations, and we shall observe first, the fact; and secondly, the proofs.

I. The fact of the consistency of God's acts with His declarations. "Hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" We are not to judge the Almighty by ourselves. We often speak words, without any meaning, often make promises, and denounce threats without any intention of fulfilling them; or when we mean what we say, frequently we have not the power of putting our intentions into execution. He, on the contrary, never speaks an idle word, and when He makes a declaration He never lacks the power to accomplish His designs. The meaning and the power are the two things which constitute the perfection of God's character. It is this admirable combination above all else that makes Him the object of Majestic

awe to all His intelligent creatures. Did He not mean what He says no reliance could be placed upon the truth of His word. Had He not the power to carry out His meaning, His authority could be defied with impunity ; hence our love, our fear, our worship of Him would be void of effect, and all our religious exercises would be a worthless waste of time. But "O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord." His truth is infallible, His power infinite, therefore fear and tremble before Him.

There are three things deducible from this consistency of the Divine character. First, the strictness of His justice ; secondly, the purity of His holiness ; and thirdly, the effect of His love.

1. We may look with confidence on the strictness of His justice. He will by no means condemn the innocent, neither will He acquit the guilty. In whatever light we may regard the conduct of men, of this we may rest assured, in the hand of God the right execution of the law is perfectly safe. Fallible man often errs in judgment. By an act of human execution of justice a person may be committed, tried, condemned, executed, and his name handed down to posterity branded with the epithet *murderer*, whilst at the same time he may be perfectly innocent of the crime brought to his charge ; and on the other hand a person may be cleared, acquitted, justified, exalted, whilst his hands and conscience may be stained with blood. Not so here, knowledge of the facts and fidelity to the law secures the ends of justice ; no innocent shall be condemned, no guilty shall escape. Every one shall be judged according to his works. The thunderbolt of justice will not miss the mark, the aim is perfect—the execution complete. "O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord."

2. The purity of His holiness is connected with His consistency. He is of "purer eyes than to behold evil," and cannot look on iniquity. The Psalmist reflecting on His purity has said, "For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness, neither shall evil dwell with thee. The foolish shall not stand in thy sight, thou hatest all workers of

iniquity." It is the purity of His holiness that arms His justice with its terrors. Did He not abhor sin and detest corruption, rectitude would be to Him a matter of indifference, whilst His nature being without spot or blemish He admires right and abominates wrong. How can a corrupt soul stand in His presence ! " O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord."

8. The effect of His love soars above and sinks beneath His justice and His holiness in bringing out the fact of His consistency. Here both His justice and holiness are gracious and merciful ; for the rebel is pardoned whilst justice retains its fame, the polluted is accepted into favour whilst His holiness remains unsullied. Who can fathom the depth of that love which comprises within its operation the offended and the offending party ! which can release the offender by punishing the offence in the person of a second individual without diminishing one item of its fervour towards that individual ! which can scan creation and introduce hope and happiness to millions who deserved nothing but wrath and perdition ! " O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord."

Let us observe—

II. The proofs of the consistency of God's acts with His declarations.

Those proofs are so extensive that our limits will not allow but a cursory glance at them. They may be taken, first from prophecies, secondly from promises, and thirdly from threatenings.

1. We have proofs recorded in prophecies compared with their fulfilment in unison with " the word of the Lord."

The prediction of future events must of necessity be dictated by one who sees into futurity, and knows the end from the beginning. Every finite being must say as Joseph answered Pharaoh. " It is not in me, God shall show Pharaoh an answer of peace." St. Peter tells us that " prophecy came not of old time, by the will of man ; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

So that every prophecy of Scripture may be called "the word of the Lord." Regard then the prophecies respecting persons, places, and things, and compare them with the later events of historical records, you will find how exactly they correspond. Take for instance the prophecies respecting the posterities of Noah, of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob. In consequence of the different behaviour of his sons, Noah, as a patriarch, was enlightened, and as the father of a family, was empowered to foretel the different future destinies of those sons respectively. God, willing to manifest His superintendence and government of the world, endued Noah with the spirit of prophecy, and enabled him in some measure to disclose the purpose of His providence towards the future inhabitants of the earth. In the same manner the destinies of Ishmael and Isaac the sons of Abraham, of Esau and Jacob the sons of Isaac, and of the twelve sons of Jacob, were foretold by their ancestors before but few of them had been born. The subsequent history of those people shows how precisely the predictions were fulfilled. Think of the prophecies respecting Egypt, Babylon, Nineveh, Greece, Rome, Jerusalem, and a great variety of other places that might be mentioned, and compare them with their histories, you will find them agree as "in water face answereth to face." Above all things of the prophecies respecting Our Saviour, numerous as they are from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Malachi, including His nature, His parentage, His birth, His life, His sufferings, His persecutions, His trials, His death, His burial, His resurrection, His ascension to heaven ; not one of them has been left unfulfilled, even to the sponge and vinegar, every item was accomplished in the transactions of His remarkable history. When, on Mount Calvary He said, "It is finished," He intimated to the world that all which was written of Him in the law, and in the Psalms, and the prophets had come to pass. How fully again have been verified the prophecies respecting the Jews, the seven churches of Asia, the rise of Antichrist, and the spread of the gospel. God has here given us sufficient evidence of the truth of His character. Every event of the world demands

attention to the greatness of His Majesty. "O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord."

2. Another series of proofs may be drawn from the promises of God. Those promises vindicate at once His power and faithfulness, in no instance have they failed in the accomplishment. Amid the convulsions of nature, the revolutions of states, and the changes of circumstances, God's promises have stood sure, heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one jot nor one tittle of His word has failed. Faith in His promises has sustained the sinking hopes of His people in every age, and by patiently waiting upon Him those hopes have been invariably rewarded. Did He promise Noah that "henceforth all the days of the earth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease?" Has there been a cessation of the seasons ever since? Did He promise Abraham that he should possess an heir, that as the stars of heaven, and the sands on the sea shore should his seed be, and that in his seed should all the nations of the earth be blessed? Have not the events proved consistent with the promises? Did He not promise the Israelites that they should be taken from Egypt with a mighty hand, and a stretched out arm, and possess a "land flowing with milk and honey," where they should dwell in peace and safety? Were they not led unto the land notwithstanding the obstinacy of their own disposition, and the obstacles cast in the way by the opposition of surrounding enemies? Did He not promise David that his posterity should sit upon the throne of Judah, and was it not verified? Did He not promise the Church that the Messiah should appear in the fulness of time to repair the breaches of Adam's fall, and to rescue his race from the power of Satan and sin? Did He not promise His people that the Holy Ghost should come to guide, to strengthen, and to comfort them? Did He not promise the apostles that their ministry should be accompanied by signs and wonders to the conviction of both Jews and Gentiles? and did He not promise them that in the midst of persecution they should be defended and prospered? Then place the

results opposite the promises, look at this picture and look at that, and see if there be not a correspondence of parts. How convincing of the consistency of God's acts with His declarations! Not only *earth*, but *heaven* must admire the fact, whilst confidence in the Divine faithfulness must be established. "O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord."

3. If promises have been verified, threatenings have also been fulfilled. The God who is faithful to the one, will not belie Himself respecting the other. The erring and rebellious may feel it hard to believe that such threatenings as "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God;" "If ye turn not, he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready; he ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors;" "I will also laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you," can be true, and shall certainly be accomplished. But the future must be concluded by comparison with the past. Take the example of the antediluvians, of Sodom and Gomorrah, of the Egyptians, of the Ninevites, of the Babylonians, of the Jews, and of the various nations and individuals, who had been threatened and were punished for disobedience, and for their unrelenting disregard of the warnings which had been vouchsafed to them. "O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord." He has engaged to reward the righteous, and He has pledged His justice to punish the wicked. No power in heaven, on earth, or in hell can induce Him to change His word. His counsel shall stand, and He will do all His pleasure. We may therefore conclude with two short sentences. If you obey Him, *rejoice*; if you rebel against Him, *fear*. If you obey Him, rejoice, for He has engaged to protect you in life, to befriend you in death, and to make you happy throughout eternity. If you rebel against Him, fear; for He threatens you with destitution here, and with distress and anguish hereafter. Do you believe this? If so, return unto Him and your soul shall be saved.

The Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity.

MORNING SERVICE.—First Lesson : Jer. xxxv.

Verses 18, 19.—“ *And Jeremiah said unto the house of the Rechabites, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel ; Because ye have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts, and done according unto all that he hath commanded you : Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel ; Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before me for ever.*”

THE first we read of Jonadab, the son of Rechab, is in the Second Book of Kings, where he went out to meet Jehu, and joined with him in the destruction of the house of Ahab, King of Israel. The Rechabites were the descendants of Jethro, Moses's father-in-law, who is called the Kenite in the Book of Judges. We may conclude that in compliance with the invitation of Moses (Numbers x. 29—32) those people united themselves to the Israelites in the wilderness, went up with them into the land of Canaan, and finally settled down among the tribe of Judah. They had no portion allotted to them in the division of the land, but lived in tents and supported themselves by such services as they could render to the proprietors of the soil. In one of the parables of Balaam he speaks of the Kenites as dwelling in strong places amongst the rocks, and should be wasted when Assur, or the Assyrians, should take them away captive. The history of the Kenites, or as they are here called Rechabites, represents them as being a pious, God-fearing people. There were some persons among them who stood forth prominently at different times ; such as

Jael, the wife of Heber, Rechab, and Jonadab. At what time and for what purpose Jonadab gave the command to his posterity to drink no wine, to build no houses, and to plant no vineyards is not recorded in Scripture. Some suppose that it was to preserve the custom which their ancestors practised in the land of Midian, where they confined themselves to the life of shepherds, dwelling in tents, and tending their flocks, which were removed from one place to the other where they could obtain pasturage; instead of cultivating the soil and planting vines they were satisfied with such sustenance as those flocks could yield. Others think that having no inheritance in the land, they were commanded by their father to live upon their respective employments, and not expect to enjoy the same luxuries as those who possessed lands and revenues. Others think that he wished thereby to inure them to hardships, as, by a prophetic spirit, he foresaw the calamities that should in future befall the people amongst whom they inhabited. However, those people are here held up as an example worthy of imitation; not so much in their abstinence from drinking wine, as in obedience to their father's command. The contrast is here drawn between their conduct and that of the Jews in Jeremiah's time. "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Go and tell the men of Judah," &c. (ver. 13, 14). The Rechabites devotedly obeyed the command of a man, the Jews impiously disobeyed the command of God, therefore, whilst the former are praised, the latter are condemned.

In calling attention to the subject we would regard the one as a chart and the other as a beacon; the one directs us to safety, the other warns us of danger; the conduct of the one we should imitate, the conduct of the other we should avoid. We shall now direct you chiefly to the chart, but at the same time not losing sight of the beacon.

Our text suggests two things. First, the commendation expressed; and, secondly, the benefit awarded.

I. We have the commendation expressed. "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Because ye have obeyed

the command of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts, and done according unto all that he hath commanded you." Observe, the commendation comes from the highest source. It is a privilege to be commended by man, when that man is of a character and position worthy of respect; and when we feel conscious that our conduct is worthy of commendation; but when God commends it is a privilege above anything that can be conferred by man, inasmuch as His approval of conduct establishes a consciousness of well-doing, and an interest in substantial benefits. The Divine commendation is not merely confined to the praise of the immediate individual, but it extends to the encouragement of others. Thus, when he commended Noah, and Abraham, and Moses, and Job, and David, they were held forth as examples for others to follow. When our Saviour commended the Centurion, the Samaritan, the Syrophenician woman, and the poor widow of the two mites, it was for imitation of His disciples of every age.

God's commendation of the obedience of the Rechabites was founded on three reasons. First, because it was actuated by a principle of filial respect; secondly, it was observed in the face of difficulties; and thirdly, it resisted the greatest temptation.

1. It was actuated by a principle of filial respect. They did not abstain from drinking wine, from building houses, and from planting vineyards because they were convinced of any moral evil connected with either simply considered in itself, but because Jonadab, the son of Rechab, their father, had commanded it. This feeling of love to their father's memory, and respect to their father's command regulated their whole lives and conduct, so that in no circumstance did they swerve from their obedience. The root of all good as well as of all evil is in the heart. The motive which actuates the act constitutes its virtues; it is this God observes, this He appreciates, He desires truth in the inward parts. The least thing done from a sincere desire to please Him out of regard to His name and His word, is infinitely more highly valued than the

most brilliant action in the absence of such filial regard. It was this that made the prayer of the poor publican in the Temple so much more acceptable than that of the proud Pharisee, and it is this that renders the unpretending tear of the insignificant Christian of far greater worth than the most costly offering of the ostentatious worshipper. Those who possess this principle do not question the why and the wherefore of His commands. They may not see any great moral evil in some forbidden sins, nor any peculiar virtue in some prescribed duties. Some may ask, What harm could there be in Adam and Eve eating the fruit of the tree which was in the midst of the garden? or what virtue can there be in exercising faith in the Son of God? what harm can there be in the indulgence of what they may esteem an innocent pleasure? or what virtue can there be in an act of self-denial? this is not the question with the believer; our Father has commanded it, and our respect for Him compels us to obey. This was the feeling of St. Paul when he "conferred not with flesh and blood," but immediately obeyed the Divine calling; and this was the feeling of the holy martyrs and confessors when they counted not their lives dear to them, but cheerfully gave them up in the service of God.

2. The Rechabites obeyed in the face of difficulties. It was not a slight deprivation to dwell in fragile tents during the cold and storms of winter when they might have been sheltered by strong and weather-tight houses; it was not a small sacrifice to abstain from wine in a country so productive of the article; it was no little trial to live differently from all their neighbours when they were probably ridiculed for their exclusiveness. No deprivation however influenced their conduct, they would obey the command of Jonadab, the son of Rechab, their father, in the midst of all difficulties. There is a religion of convenience which appears fair and promising during the sunshine of prosperity, when the world smiles, and circumstances are favourable; but it shrinks from contact with difficulties, and cannot endure the deprivation of ease and comfort. Such a religion is like a beautiful yacht, well pro-

portioned, neatly rigged, and ornamentally painted, and completely fitted out for the smooth surface of an inland lake; but if she attempted the broad Atlantic, to contend with the surging waves, the raging storm, and the driving hurricane, the consequence would be distressing shipwreck. The multitudes followed Christ in admiring crowds whilst they expected Him to become king to save them from the degrading subjection to a foreign yoke, and to promote them to positions of preferment and honour in the world; but when they learnt that He had not "where to lay his head," that His kingdom was not of this world, and that nothing could be looked for but poverty, destitution, and persecutions, they all forsook him and fled, except the few in whose hearts were planted the principles of the Rechabites, preferring to endure the greatest deprivations rather than disobey His command. They, like Himself, "endured the cross, despised the shame," and "reckoned that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory which shall be (hereafter) revealed." Brethren, is your religion of such a nature that you consider no sacrifice too great to make in obedience to the command of God your Father?

3. The obedience of the Rechabites resisted the strongest temptation, a temptation shaped in the most insinuating form, and backed by the most influential authority. The greatness of this temptation will not appear except you consider the mode, and the place in which, as well as the person by whom it was presented. To abstain from wine on any ordinary occasion would have been no sacrifice to those people, they had never been accustomed to it, they knew nothing experimentally of its flavour, nor of its effects; but being taken into the House of God, by His own prophet, for whom, doubtless, they entertained the profoundest reverence, and there in the secrecy of the chamber of "a man of God" invited to partake of an abundance sufficient to satisfy the most craving appetite, was a trial which required the energy of a stedfast principle and a powerful resolution to resist. It was this, above all other things, which made them the

medium of reproof to the Jews. *They* had disobeyed God without any temptation, and persisted in that disobedience, notwithstanding every inducement to obedience, and repeated warnings and threatenings; but the Rechabites withstood the strongest temptation though there had been but one command given by a distant ancestor who had lived nearly three hundred years before the event.

Temptation is the great criterion of principle. A man may avoid actual sin, and attend to an ordinary course of commanded duty, whilst there is no inducement to commit the one, nor to neglect the other, but doing the same when a powerful temptation is presented, to act differently is a proof that his sense of obedience is grounded and fixed. There was no difficulty in the way of the Hebrew children to worship God in Babylon until the Royal edict commanded them to worship the golden image which Nebuchadnezzar the King had set up in the vale of Dura. Daniel's exercise of prayer was smooth and easy until the law of the Medes and Persians was signed and sealed by the king, binding that no prayer should be offered for thirty days except to himself. Those men proved their obedience to God by resisting the temptation. So have others done when the alternative of honour or death was placed before them. Many who live in neglect of God, and practise a course of wickedness, may attribute their delinquencies to a powerful temptation which they had not the resolution to withstand.

We shall briefly observe—

II. The benefit awarded to the house of the Rechabites for their obedience. "Therefore, thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before me for ever;" or, as it is otherwise read, "*There shall not be cut off a man of, or unto Jonadab, the son of Rechab, standing before me all the days;*" intimating that either his posterity should not be utterly rooted out, but continue in being, and consequently *before* God, as are all things that have existence; or that they should be preserved in some peculiar station. The phrase "for ever" is to be taken in

two senses : first, it means during the state or dispensation then in existence ; and, secondly, it means eternal existence. In both these respects it may be applied to the Rechabites, thus comprehending temporal and spiritual benefits.

Some have thought that the promise had a reference to a constant employment in connection with the sacred offices of the temple, because they were scribes, and were given to the study of literature. Eusebius, in his Ecclesiastical History, asserts that by intermarriage with the daughters of priests and Levites some of them in the process of time were advanced to the office of priests, and that one of them (a priest) being present at the murder of James the Just, reproved the Jews for their cruelty in so doing. Others again suppose that they were the Essenes of our Saviour's time, and that many of them early embraced the Gospel, being alluded to by St. Paul in some of his epistles. If so, the promise of our text extended beyond a perpetuity in existence and honourable positions, including also a state of eternal happiness in the world to come.

Such a promise is not confined to any single branch of the human family, all who fear God and obey His commands are comprehended within its purport. The ground of obedience is a sure ground of success and safety—temporal success, eternal safety. "Salvation belongeth unto the Lord, (His) blessing is upon (His) people." Not that we can merit God's favour by our obedience, for having done all we are unprofitable servants ; but in connection with our obedience He has vouchsafed to bestow His blessing. The merit is on the part of Christ, He has deserved that which God is pleased to give ; and He having deserved them for us, our obedience in imitation of the great examples placed before us is the condition of our receiving those benefits. Neither the change of dispensation nor the length of time has altered the condition. The Rechabites received a promise of perpetuity and prosperity in conjunction with their obedience ; we have the same promise continued on the same condition. Then, let no temptation induce us to swerve from the path of duty which will ever be the path of safety.

The Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity.

EVENING SERVICE.—Second Lesson : Rom. x.

Verse 17.—“ *So then, faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*”

It has been often asked, why all the expense and labour and trouble of sending the gospel to heathen lands? There are some hundreds of thousands of pounds collected annually in Great Britain, some hundreds of sermons are preached and speeches delivered; time is spent in going from town to town, from village to village, and from house to house; hundreds of persons are called upon to relinquish their dearest ties, to part from their friends and their comforts in life, to trust themselves to the contingencies of a long voyage, to settle down in a hut at the mercy of barbarous savages, to spend their lives amongst dangers and insults and persecutions, and then to sink into a forlorn grave without even a shrub to mark their resting-place; and what is it all for? There is no *natural* obligation to make such sacrifices; those devoted persons might have lived in ease and comfort and luxury at home, and the hundreds of thousands of pounds might have been appropriated to more selfish purposes. Why then do it? The answer is given in the text, “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” Those who feel for the salvation of souls that cannot be saved but by exercising faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, are convinced of their duty to make known the means by which that faith is to be obtained. Hence the reason why so many efforts are made for the spread of the gospel.

St. Paul has already proved in this epistle that all men are sinners, and that the only way of justifying the sinner before

God is by his exercising simple faith in Christ as a Saviour without any reliance upon his own meritorious righteousness. The Judaizing portion of the Roman Church wished to mix up the law with the gospel, their own righteousness with the righteousness of Christ, the works of ceremonial observances with the works of faith, the merits of Sinai with the merits of Calvary. Not so, for the one being imperfect cannot save, whilst the other answers all the ends of salvation. But the question arises, how is a man to possess the necessary faith that he may be saved? Not by living in ignorance of God's will respecting man's duty. He must believe, but how can he believe in him of whom he has not heard? The apostle forcibly argues this point in the preceding verses respecting both Jew and Gentile. "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent?" From the whole of these arguments we may note that the only way to heaven is by Christ, the only way to Christ is by faith, and the only way to faith is by the gospel." "So then faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God."

In the text we are taught, first, that a Divine revelation is absolute for the foundation of saving faith; secondly, that such a faith is produced in the soul through the senses of the body.

I. A Divine revelation is absolute for the foundation of saving faith. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

By saving faith we understand something different from a mere belief in the existence and attributes of God. Creation and Providence reveal much of God in this respect. He is visible in all His works. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth know-

ledge." When the apostle said that "the world by wisdom knew not God," he did not mean His existence and attributes, for thus the heathen are without excuse, inasmuch as the very construction of the universe, and the provisions made for the regulation of the whole, prove that a Being must exist who is powerful and wise, faithful and good. All this may be believed, and is believed by thousands who are utterly destitute of the faith intended in our text. Such a faith comprehends not only that a Supreme Being, by His power and wisdom, His justice and holiness, His faithfulness and goodness, governs the world for the universal benefit of His creatures, but also that *that* Being is willing to be our spiritual Benefactor, and our eternal Friend, on conditions which none of His works in creation and providence declare. Hence He has graciously supplied the deficiency by what is here emphatically called *the Word of God*, alluding to the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, especially to the declarations made by Christ in revealing the way of salvation.

There are three things which prove the necessity of "the Word of God" for salvation.

1. This only reveals God to the world in His true character. How meagre and contracted must be the knowledge of God in the absence of a Divine revelation! This accounts for the wild notions of "gods many and lords many" which existed among ancient, and do exist among modern heathen nations. Even with the aid of tradition which those people must have possessed, introducing into their theology much that is true and virtuous, their ideas of the object of adoration are full of the most absurd and cruel incongruities. Why is it that we can perceive the folly of their creeds? it is not that we are naturally endowed with brighter intelligence, but because we are blessed with a brighter light—with more extensive views of God as revealed in His Word.

When the beauty of His character is brought before us in Scripture, we are struck with admiration at the greatness of His Majesty and the purity of His nature, combined with

the depth of his condescension and the boundlessness of His mercy in forgiving sin. When He is represented to us as an eternal, self-existent, independent, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent Being, possessing an essence so pure as not to "behold evil," and cannot "look upon iniquity," we are struck with awe, and we tremble in His presence; but when our attention is drawn to Him in His condescending love, "reconciling a sinful world to Himself in Christ Jesus, not imputing their trespasses unto them"—seeking to be gracious—looking to the man that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at His word, we are filled with wonder, love, and praise. When we stand with the Israelites at the foot of Sinai, beholding His Majesty in the midst of the thunder and lightning, and the earthquake, and the smoke, and the sound of the trumpet, with them we shrink away in despair; but when we stand with the beloved disciple at the foot of Calvary beholding His compassion beaming forth in the dying struggle of His only begotten Son, we are attracted to Him by the cords of filial confidence which nothing can destroy. Such is the gospel's God, of whom in its absence we should have known nothing to salvation.

2. The Word of God alone reveals to the world the true position of man. No human record has yet been discovered which accounts satisfactorily for the origin of his race, the depth of his depravity, or the certainty of his future prospects. It is true many have indulged in conjectures, but so far from the truth that no one has come to a satisfactory conclusion. The Bible, however, reveals all in such a manner that no doubt can be entertained respecting its statements. What we learn here in respect to each of these points is absolutely necessary to our wellbeing. Unless we know the origin of our existence we cannot know to whom we are indebted for our being, unless we know the extent of our sinfulness we cannot be conscious of the danger in which we are placed, and unless we know that we are destined to happiness or misery we cannot appreciate the one nor dread the other.

"All have sinned" is a doctrine forcibly inculcated in

Scripture. Perhaps no doctrine is more reluctantly received by the human mind and more resolutely contended against; neither is this to be wondered at when we consider that it tends so much to humble the pride, to awaken the fear, and to lessen the carnal happiness of every child of Adam. Still, unpalatable as it is, the fact stares us in the face, "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." It is our interest to know it—it is our duty to believe it—it is our solemn concern to come to the knowledge of our guilt and danger that we may be induced to avail ourselves of the only means of pardon and safety. While we feel ourselves "whole" we certainly can never suspect "our need of a physician;" while we are unaware of our guilt, we cannot be supposed to look for deliverance. Thank God for His revealed Word, by which we are stripped, exposed, condemned, that we may flee to a place of refuge where we may be rescued from perdition.

3. The Word of God alone directs to the true means of salvation. The world has been universally conscious of misery; both the pains of body and the anxiety of mind which are endured have taught it the unwelcome lesson; but how to get rid of the misery is a problem which it has never been able to solve. The minds of philosophers, physicians, and moralists have exhausted their powers in trying to discover a remedy; the result, however, has been a painful uncertainty. But "life and immortality have been brought to light by the gospel." The dawn of hope shone upon the desolations of Adam's fall immediately after Paradise was strewn with the ruins of innocence, and defaced by the wreck of unspotted virtue and holiness; the ray burst through the darkness in the first revealed promise of the seed of the woman to bruise the serpent's head. The Redeemer embraced the earliest opportunity to exhibit His divinely amiable character in declaring to apostate man His design to "save his people from their sins." Even before He pronounced the sentence of punishment over the delinquents, He prepared them to sustain the terms of it by publishing their recovery as an introduction to the declaration of their

condemnation and ruin. The carrying out of that declaration was the object of all the subsequent revelations, whether by verbal communication, by types, by dreams, or by visions, until the Son of God appeared incarnate "to seek and to save them that were lost." In His personal teaching He revealed the will of the Father to the world, and directed man how to approach the Father. He stood forth as "the Way, the Truth, and the Life," and invited the "weary and heavy laden" to come to Him for rest. By "His cross and passion" He "opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers," and directed that "repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." Thus by the Word of God, declared by prophets, by Christ, and by apostles, a foundation of faith is presented to us.

We observe—

II. That such a faith is produced in the soul through the senses of the body. "Faith cometh by hearing." The body is the vehicle of the soul in this life, therefore it is the medium through which all the emotions of the soul are produced. The mind cannot act but through the sensations of the body. Whatever ideas it may form, whatever emotions it may feel, must be conveyed to it through the avenues of bodily senses. Its feelings of pleasure or pain, of joy or sorrow, of hope or despair, as well as its ideas of precious or vile, of colour or sound, of rough or smooth, are the result of bodily exercise. If a person were born and were to live for ages in deprivation of all the senses of the body, however sound and hearty the mind, that mind would be totally vague and emotionless as long as it would be joined to the body; for instance, a man that is born blind can never form an idea of colour; he may distinguish between rough and smooth, square and round, tall and short, because he can feel the objects, but however minutely you may describe the difference between black and white, blue and green, red and yellow, he will never be able to comprehend your meaning. In like manner a deaf man cannot distinguish the difference between

the roar of a lion and the chirp of a bird, between a clap of thunder and a note in music. God has therefore graciously furnished us with bodily senses for the improvement and gratification of our minds.

Faith is an act of the mind which cannot be exercised independently of the body; as soon as the soul is released from the body a saving faith will not be necessary, for it will then be put in possession of the objects of its trust. Faith therefore cometh by *hearing*, not by seeing or feeling, for that which is seen or felt is not a subject of faith, inasmuch as faith is a confident belief in a testimony, that testimony must be heard to be believed. If we had never heard of God, of Christ, of heaven, of hell, there could be no faith to operate upon either. If God had not been represented to us as infinitely great, and good, and faithful, we could place no reliance upon His promises. If Christ had not been declared unto us as having atoned for our sins—as having risen from the dead for our justification—and as being able to save to the uttermost all who come to God through Him, we could have no confidence in Him as our Saviour. Hence the great importance of preaching. “How can they hear without a preacher?” Some persons undervalue preaching. They go to church not to hear the preaching but to join in the prayers; preaching, they say, is for ignorant people who cannot read and think for themselves. Now, we would not for a thousand worlds underrate prayer, it is a Divine institution essential to the strength and elevation of the soul. The man that lives without prayer lives without God; but he who despises preaching never prayed in the estimation of God. Preaching is of the greater importance of the two, for prayer is a message from man to God, preaching is a message from God to man. It is enforced in Scripture—it was commanded by Christ—it was practised by the apostles. Preaching the Word of God produces conviction, conversion, and faith. When practised in the strength of the Spirit by such men as the prophets, John the Baptist, the apostles, the Christian fathers, Martin Luther, George Whitfield, John Wesley,

Rowlands of Llangeitho, and thousands of the like characters, it possesses a power which the most determined sinners have not been able to resist. Let us then spend and be spent in preaching the "Word of God," knowing that it is His appointed means to produce faith in Christ, to the present satisfaction and future happiness of the soul.

The Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity.

MORNING SERVICE.—Second Lesson : Matthew xvii.

Verse 2.—“ *And was transfigured before them : and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.*”

THE various circumstances of Christ's life blended together to establish His character as the Son of God and the Saviour of men. His career upon earth was that of sorrow and pain, relieved only by a few events that alleviated the constant scenes of depression to which He was exposed. Like a portion of smooth surface upon the troubled waters, or a clear spot on a clouded sky, those events cheered Him onwards as the man Christ Jesus until He came to the close of His unparalleled trials. Even those few spots were not free from marring contingencies ; unlike unto us who can for a while forget our direst troubles, His mind could not repose under the weight of the burthen which pressed upon Him. If the heavens opened when He ascended from Jordan, having been baptized by John, it was with the prospect of being immediately plunged into the extremity of temptation ; if His countenance and garments shone on the mount of transfiguration, it was in the midst of conversation with the heavenly visitants about His sufferings at Jerusalem ; if His path was strewn with “branches of palm trees” as he descended from Mount Olivet, it was just before He exclaimed, “Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say ? Father, save me from this hour ! but for this cause came I to this hour.”

The brightest spot in the history of our Lord's life is the incident recorded in this lesson, showing at once the majesty of His own person, and the interest manifested in His mission to earth by the occupants of heaven.

The great subject of the transfiguration may be divided into three parts; first, its nature; secondly, its circumstances; and, thirdly, its object.

I. Let us notice the nature of Christ's transfiguration.

1. It was external in its form. It was a *transfiguration*, not a *transformation*,—not an unclothing, but a clothing upon. It was the mantle of heaven cast over the garb of earth—a ray of divinity bursting through the cloud of humanity. There was no change in the substance, but a change in appearance. In this it was different from the change which took place at His resurrection from the dead, and from that which shall take place on our bodies at the resurrection of the last day. In the latter circumstances is involved a change from the natural to the spiritual—from the earthy to the heavenly—from mortality to immortality, after which there can be no suffering, no trial. Christ's sufferings did not cease after His transfiguration. St. Luke tells us that Moses and Elias talked with Him "of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem," showing that the greatest of His sufferings were yet to come.

2. It was extreme in its glory. "His face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light." Such expressions are often employed to signify the height of magnificence and splendour. Moses's face shone when he came down from the mount, so that the people of Israel could not look at it, but a veil was sufficient to cover that brightness; but both Christ's face and garments shone with such a glorious lustre that dazzled into temporary unconsciousness the earthly beholders. He, who was generally in the likeness of man, now appeared in the form of God. The Light of the World appeared as the Sun of Righteousness. Never did His body appear in such majestic splendour before, never had the eyes of mortals rested on such transcendent glory. It was "the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth,"—a glory similar to that in which He shall appear in the last day to be glorified with His saints.

3. It was powerful in its effect. We cannot tell what effect it produced on the mind of the man Christ Jesus Himself, or on the heavenly visitants who came to converse with Him; but we are informed that the disciples were much affected by it. First, they were so wrapped up in ecstasy at the sight and conversation that they knew not what to say; but Peter, by way of saying something, said, "Master, it is good for us to be here; if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias." They had often held sweet converse with Jesus before, His doctrines had opened their understanding, His teaching had attracted their affections, His accents of sympathy had touched their hearts, but never had they felt such raptures of delight as when he opened His heart in the presence of members of His family made perfect. It was a foretaste, though not a plenary fruition, of that happiness which will be realized in God's presence, where there "is fulness of joy," and at His "right hand, where there are pleasures for evermore." They forgot the valley below, where were their fellow-disciples; earthly ties and family connexions were entirely cast aside; their minds were so fully engrossed with the pure fellowship of that "company of heaven," that the fellowships of earth were no longer remembered. Have we not, my brethren, felt a similar entrancing emotion of the mind in holding communion with Christ in spirit, though absent in the body? It may not have been to the same extent as that felt by His disciples in His beautified person, but to such a degree as to induce a wish to remain in that frame for ever. If such a transcendent glimpse of His glory produced so powerful an effect on the minds of the disciples, and if an inferior glimpse by faith produces a similar effect on our minds in this world, what must it be to enjoy a complete entertainment in the full view of all His glory in the world to come?

Let us notice—

II. The circumstances of the transfiguration. We may regard here the place where it occurred, the persons in whose

presence it occurred, and the satisfactory conclusion of the occurrence.

1. The place was on "a high mountain." What mountain is not certain, but generally supposed to be Mount Tabor, which was in the midst of Galilee, and where our Saviour is said to be after His descent from the mount. Whatever might have been the name of the mount, it was a place consecrated by the prayers of Christ. St. Luke says that "He went to the mountain to pray, and as he prayed the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistening." Probably He chose the high mountain as being a retired spot, out of the reach of the confusion of the bustling world. Our Saviour had some selected spots upon earth which He honoured with the most remarkable incidents of His life. Those spots were generally the most remote from the haunts of men. There was the mountain where He delivered His most comprehensive sermon; there was the Mount of Olives, at the foot of which was the garden of Gethsemane, where He often resorted to for private prayer; and there was this high mountain, where he was transfigured in the presence of His disciples. Doubtless He attached great importance to those places; they stood forth prominently in the records of His mind, and we may conclude that they are marked spots on the map of His sojourn amongst men, now that He is in heaven. Every Christian, like his glorious Master, has his select place of retirement, that is endeared to him by the happy communion which he there holds with his God, and which will be remembered with gratitude and love when all the changes of life are past. The closet, the grove, the mountain, or the retired field will be for ever marked in his memory as the hallowed spots of life where he enjoyed a little heaven below. Mount Tabor, and Mount Olives, as well as Mount Calvary will never be forgotten by either Christ or His disciples.

2. We have the company that witnessed the transfiguration. There were two from heaven, and three from earth. The two from heaven were Moses and Elias, two men, not two angels, because men were more nearly concerned in what was being

done. There had elapsed nearly fifteen hundred years since Moses died, his body had been buried by the Almighty, so that no one could find his grave. Probably he had been preserved from corruption, or he was raised from the dead for this occasion, inasmuch as he appeared in the body as well as Elias. There had elapsed nine hundred years since Elias had been taken both soul and body into heaven ; but neither of them had been so long in glory that they could not sympathise with their Saviour, in His human sufferings upon earth. It may be asked why Moses and Elias should appear rather than Abel, the first martyr ; or Noah, the monument of Providential care ; or Abraham, the father of the faithful ? It may be given as a reason, because Moses was the giver of the law to Israel, and Elias was the restorer of the law in Israel, and the chief of the prophets. They came to lay their honour and authority at the feet of Jesus, acknowledging that both the law and the prophets were absorbed in Him. By thus appearing personally, in the presence of earthly witnesses, they established the Messiahship of Christ, and recommended the claims of His Gospel to the approval and reception of the world. Then there were three present from earth, who were Peter, James, and John. It may be again asked why were these three selected in preference to any of the others ? There might have been three reasons ; first, they were the most eminent for grace, zeal, and love to Christ, consequently were more highly dignified and honoured by Him. The greatest manifestations of glory are made by God to those who are most exemplary in grace. Secondly, these three were to be witnesses of Christ's last agony and passion, as they would remain with Him whilst the others would leave him and flee ; to prepare them for that scene of His distress they were here made witnesses of His glory. This glorious vision of Mount Tabor fitted them to abide the terrors of Mount Calvary. Thirdly, Peter was probably taken as being the first to preach the Gospel to both the Jews and the Gentiles, James as being the first to suffer martyrdom for Him, and John as being the beloved apostle who was to outlive the rest ; thus Christ dis-

tinguished them on particular occasions above the other disciples. Another question arises here, which is this, how were the disciples made acquainted with Moses and Elias? It might have been from the purport of their conversation with the Saviour, or more likely by a special revelation from heaven, as Paul was afterwards informed of things which were not "lawful to be uttered." There is, however, the inference to be drawn, that our knowledge of each other will be perfect in that state of glory when all our happiness will be subordinate to the communion of saints, in addition to our admiration of God in Christ.

3. We come to the satisfactory conclusion of the transfiguration. When Peter yet spake of making three tabernacles, "behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and behold, a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." It was necessary that a cloud should overshadow the disciples, as they could not stand the resplendency of that glory which surrounded the Majesty of the Speaker. They were already overcome with the glory of the Son in flesh, how could they behold the unclouded glory of the Father all divine? As we cannot look upon the natural sun in his full splendour but when he is reflected by a cloud, much more the full glory of God is insupportable until He veils it with a cloud to shelter us from the "light which is inaccessible." Still, it was not such a cloud as hung over Mount Sinai at the giving of the law, through which issued flashes of lightning, and from which burst claps of thunder; but it was a cloud with a bright lining, intimating a blessing and not foreboding a curse—a cloud whence issued accents of approbation and encouragements of hope. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Moses had now withdrawn, and carried away the terrors of Sinai; Jesus was left alone, His bosom heaving with mercy and compassion towards those whom the law of Moses condemned. This is my *Son*, not a *servant*, as Moses was in the house—a Son beloved above all others, in heaven or earth—in whom I am well pleased—pleased with His person, and pleased with

His work—pleased with all that he says, and all that he does—
“Hear ye him.” He declares my will in the fulness of its
benign intentions, so that whatever He says shall be accom-
plished.

Replete with beneficence as this voice from the cloud was,
it was too much for the feelings of the frail disciples. “They
fell on their face, and were sore afraid.” The voice of God
must be heard by sinful man with great consternation, Christ
alone by His approach and touch can support and encourage
a sinner when he hears the Divine declarations. The voice of
the Father, although from a bright cloud, struck the disciples
with fear, but the voice of the Son raised them up, and in-
stilled strength and comfort into their minds. “And Jesus
came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid.”
Yes, be not afraid, I am near to support you, and to stand
between you and the terrors of an offended God.

We come to observe—

III. The object of Christ’s transfiguration. We have
nothing definite in Scripture on this point, still we are not
left entirely to conjecture. Three ends were served by the
event.

1. The human mind of the Redeemer was fortified and
comforted in the prospect of the deep sufferings which were
awaiting Him. His own declaration in the garden of Geth-
semane proves that He feared them. St. Matthew records
His words in chapter xxvi. 36—39. Those sufferings were
on His mind on this occasion. “His decease which he should
accomplish at Jerusalem,” being the substance of His con-
versation with Moses and Elias. He frequently spoke to His
disciples of His sufferings both before and after this event;
all things show that they greatly affected His mind. The
presence, therefore, of the heavenly visitants, and especially
the unqualified commendation uttered from the cloud, tended
to strengthen Him for the conflict, and to comfort Him in the
prospect of pain and death.

2. It gave to Him and His disciples an anticipation of

what should follow their decease. It was, in fact, a little heaven on earth ; all that we can expect to see in heaven was there in the inferior degree ; Christ was there, brighter than the meridian sun, the centre of attraction to the whole company. Perfected saints were there, speaking of a subject which astonished angels, and which will be the song of the redeemed for ever. Special manifestations of God's glory were there also, and a testimony given of His affection to, and of His satisfaction in Christ. In a word, the Owner, the Head, and the representatives of the Church met there in unity and love, rejoicing together in the same great object, without one ungodly person or hypocrite amongst them. We cannot be surprised then that Peter should say, "It is good for us to be here."

Finally—It tended to confirm the minds of the disciples in their belief of the doctrines which they were soon to preach to the world. If they were not before fully convinced of the reality of Christ's statements, the corroborative testimony of the giver of the law and the chief of the prophets removed every doubt from their thoughts ; and to render assurance doubly sure, the Father Himself added His testimony, which must have convinced every mind that He was the Son of God and the King of Israel. The majesty and divine mission of Christ, the nature and the effects of His death, the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body, and the reality and glory of a future state were here brought before them, so that no doubt could remain respecting the truth of human redemption through the sufferings and death of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus they were armed to go forth and "preach repentance and remission of sins in his name, beginning at Jerusalem." The subject, therefore, presents itself unto us in a most inviting form. Was Christ so highly honoured as to bring down the inhabitants of heaven, and even the Father Himself, to declare the high estimation in which He was held above, and shall poor insignificant man despise and reject him ? God forbid.

The Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity.

EVENING SERVICE.—First Lesson : Ezek. xiii.

Verse 20.—“ *Wherefore thus saith the Lord God ; Behold, I am against your pillows, wherewith ye there hunt the souls to make them fly, and I will tear them from your arms, and will let the souls go, even the souls that ye hunt to make them fly.*”

CARNAL men love their ease ; there is nothing so repugnant to their feelings as to be warned of their danger, it is like “vinegar to their teeth, or smoke to the eyes.” The rousing of conscience disturbs the rest of the mind ; therefore it is armed against, and resisted with all the ingenuity and powers of the soul. There is never a lack of teachers to encourage people in this day dream of security, persuading them that peace and safety exist, even when God’s messengers are sent to warn them of danger and to threaten them with His displeasure. It is pleasant to be told of love and happiness and prosperity independent of character, and people will believe in opposition to their own convictions to the contrary.

We have a true picture of degenerate man in the conduct of the Jews in the time of Ezekiel. They had forgotten all the former manifestations of God’s power and goodness, rebelled against Him, and walked in the ways of Baalim. Time after time had He invited them to return from their evil ways ; line upon line, and precept upon precept, had He given unto them ; messenger after messenger had he sent unto them ; still they persisted in forsaking His admonitions, flattering themselves that all those warnings referred to some future distant period in which they had no concern. Now

Ezekiel is sent to "the rebellious house of Israel," and through many signs and figures he declares unto them that God's patience had well nigh exhausted, and that His judgments were near at hand. But if God had His Ezekiel honestly convincing the people of their sins, Satan had his emissaries lulling them to slumber in the midst of imminent danger. A number of false prophets and false prophetesses arose publishing peace when there was no peace, and as it were making pillows of delusive hopes, when the frowning cloud of God's displeasure was suspended over the nation.

The figure is taken from the custom of those who lived in wealth and luxury, whose floors were covered with expensive carpets, and whose chambers were furnished with costly sofas and pillows. Those moral pillows were placed by the false teachers under the elbows of the people, encouraging them to take their ease, notwithstanding the threatenings of the Almighty by His prophet.

The text is a declaration of God's anger against the false teachers and those who confided in them, "Behold I am against your pillows, wherewith ye hunt the souls to make them fly, and I will tear them from your arms, and will let the souls go, even the souls that ye hunt to make them fly." This threatening extends further than that "rebellious house," and is directed against every false teacher and every unconcerned sinner.

We are taught here, First, that people are buoyed up with delusive hopes of ease and safety even whilst the cloud of Divine displeasure is suspended over them; Secondly, that God will sooner or later rend those pillows on which those people repose from under their arms.

I. We are taught that people are buoyed up with delusive hopes of ease and safety even whilst the cloud of Divine displeasure is suspended over them.

The position of public teachers of Divine things is most important and responsible; even when their motives are good they may err in judgment on the nature of their teach-

ing; how much more those whose sole object is to lead persons astray from the truth.

This is done—

1. When sin is represented in a different aspect to what it really is. The teaching of the false prophets and prophetesses of the days of Ezekiel had such a tendency. Whilst the people rebelled against heaven, worshipping false gods, confiding in false objects, and walking in the ways of wickedness, they were persuaded that there were peace and safety on the verge of desolation and ruin,—they were encouraged to sleep on the precipices of destruction. A similar effect is always produced by a false representation of the evils of sin. In these days of refined language the enormity of evil is naturally softened down by a gloss of palliating terms, instead of calling things by their right names, which has a tendency to diminish the wickedness of crime in the estimation of the thoughtless, and to increase indifference respecting the consequences of committing sin. When the foulest *lie* is called a slight prevarication; *drunkenness*, a little inebriety; *dishonesty*, a trifling forgetfulness; *covetousness*, thoughtful economy; *debauchery*, spending a pleasant evening; *gaming*, innocent amusement, the immorality is sheltered under the wing of refinement. The plain statement of the Bible is this, “Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.” If you paint sin in a different colour you give the Bible the lie, and make God a trifler. Call it by whatever name you may, apply to it any extenuating circumstances within the reach of possibility, sin is sin for all that, and every sin is mortal in its effects. You cannot deprive the reptile of its venom, nor death of its sting.

2. Pillows are formed when a greater attention is paid to gratify the feelings, than to awaken the conscience. Sin is genial to the feelings of the unregenerate sinner; he loves to be indulged in the gratification of his favourite amusement;

to be convinced of the evil is offensive; the man who has the courage to act the part of Nathan to David and tell him, "Thou art the man," is regarded his enemy; he shrinks from his presence, he avoids his company, he hates his teaching. Herod feared John the Baptist because he reproved him for his adultery; the Pharisees hated Christ because he exposed their wickedness; the Jews persecuted the apostles because they obeyed God rather than man; a faithful ministry is rejected because it awakens the conscience and disturbs the rest. The teacher of peace who connives at a fault, and countenances the neglect of moral duty, wins the smiles of the frivolous, but encourages indifference to the eternal prejudice of their souls, and draws upon himself the disapprobation of heaven. The watchman who was placed over the city was either to give due warning of danger, or incur the stains of blood. "But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come and take away any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand." (Ezek. xxxiii. 6.) Dare we stand in the presence of Omniscience with pretended clean hands when we have neglected a faithful discharge of the message which He has commanded us to deliver?

3. When man's inability to comply with the requirements of the Gospel, or to obey the commands of God, forms a prominent point of instruction, people are led to think lightly of sin and neglect the means of salvation. God's word sets before man the way of life and the way of death; he is commanded to choose the one, and to reject the other—he is commanded to love the Lord his God with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his strength—he is commanded to hate sin, to love holiness, to repent, and to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Is he commanded too much? Is anything required of him which he has no power to perform? If there be, then God acts towards him as an arbitrary tyrant. Who can lay such a charge against Him, whose essence is love, and

who awaits to be gracious? Let God be true, and every man a liar. He "said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye my face in vain." He has endowed man with power to obey every command recorded in His Word. It may be asked, "Did not man lose his power of obedience by his fall in Eden?" We answer, no. He lost his rectitude, but not his power. All his mental faculties retained the same power of action after the fall as they possessed before, the difference consisting in the inclination of the will to evil instead of to good. He can still love his friends and other favourite objects, he can still hate his enemies, he can still repent of an action which affects his interests, he can still believe his neighbour's word; why then cannot he love God, hate sin, repent of his sins, and believe in Christ? It is because he has lost his rectitude, but not his power. The plea of inability is a reflection on the character of God who is "too wise to err, and too good to be unkind." Whenever He has given a command, He has also given the corresponding strength to obey. All the declarations of scripture tend to prove this. In respect to Israel he says, "O that they were wise, that they understood this; that they would consider their latter end." Christ said to the Jews, "Ye *will* not come unto me that ye might have life." The deficiency is in the *will*, not in the *power*. If you are taught to excuse yourselves on the plea of inability, you rest upon a pillow which contains a dagger that will pierce you in the end.

4. When God's divine favours are limited to a certain chosen few, leaving the great bulk of mankind to perish hopelessly in their sins, pillows are offered to encourage ease and indifference. The doctrine of eternal predestination, when properly understood, is a "wholesome doctrine" for those who believe in the Saviour; but when it is wrested to mean that God has pointed out such persons, and none else, to obtain the grace of salvation, it leads to two evils. On the one hand people imagine that if they be elected it matters nothing what their character may be, they shall be ultimately saved; whilst on the other hand they think that however they

may strive to pray and believe, if they be not elected their labour is all in vain. On the one hand spiritual pride is fostered, on the other hand spiritual despair is established. I can easily conceive how from His infinite foreknowledge of all men, God in eternity appointed a certain number to salvation, but it appears incompatible with His benign disposition to think for a moment that regardless of man's actions He has done so to the prejudice of others. Truly, there are some isolated passages of Holy Scripture which, superficially studied, seem to teach the doctrine, but when those passages are well examined in conjunction with their respective contexts I think that they will be found to teach a doctrine reconcilable with the broad invitations of the gospel and with the unlimited provisions of grace for the wants of all. "Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die, saith the Lord God, and not that he should return from his ways and live?"

II. That God will sooner or later rend the pillows on which people repose from under their arms. The human mind is predisposed to rest upon false pillows rather than come to Christ for salvation. Christ seems to be the last resource of the sinner; even when he is roused from his lethargy and indifference he will seek a resting place in all quarters, and happiness from every source, until at last, like the man amongst the tombs seeking rest and finding none, he is compelled to flee to the Saviour.

We may name some of these resting places.

1. Virtuous and holy relations. The hypocritical Pharisees reclined upon this pillow in the time of John the Baptist and Christ. When the former warned them to flee from the wrath to come, they said within themselves, "We have Abraham to our father," as if the virtues of that faithful ancestor were transferable to them; and when the latter told them that if they knew the truth the truth should make them free, they answered, "We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man." They were surprised to learn

that though they were Abraham's seed, as long as they committed sin, they were the servants of sin, and as long as they did not perform "the works of Abraham" they were of their "father the devil." It is not sufficient to be connected with the great in faith, and the good in works; to our own Lord we must stand or fall. "Cursed is the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm."

2. Personal virtues are often relied upon as being sufficient resting places to ease the conscience and to secure safety. It is thought that when a person does "not run into the same excess of riot" as his neighbours, he can establish a ground of recommendation which will absolve him from guilt, and admit him into Divine favour. He contrasts himself with others and flatters himself that he stands high on the platform of morality. On the one hand he is no drunkard, nor adulterer, nor swearer nor liar, nor dishonest; and on the other hand he is generous, liberal, and kind; thus comparing his virtues with his vices, his good deeds with his evil ones, and finding that the former preponderate in his own scale, he is at peace with himself, and reclines happily upon his pillow. If at any time he discovers a commission of what is wrong, or an omission of what is right, it is attributed to the infirmity of human nature, and he cheers himself up with the idea that the best of men have their infirmities. Delusive hope! how can a perfect law admit of imperfect obedience? "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of the whole."

3. Sacramental grace is another pillow on which some people recline, thinking that if they have been baptized and partake of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, a sufficient passport is secured to carry them to heaven.

4. A reliance upon the mercy of God, who is rich in compassion and will forgive in answer to the expiring prayer of a death-bed repentance. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." We would not limit the power nor the goodness of Him with whom nothing is impossible; but there is neither promise nor

example within the sacred volume to encourage such a notion, there are ample promises of salvation during life, but not one if only sought in death. If you suggest the thief upon the cross as an example, you must remember that he was pardoned at such a time and under such circumstances which renders your pardon on the same ground impossible. "Wherefore thus saith the Lord God, behold I am against your pillows . . . and I will tear them from under your arms." God will sooner or later take away from us every false hope. He has His own way of salvation, which is through the Redeemer. Every other way is inefficient. However delusive expectations may prop persons up for a time, they must ultimately give way, leaving the dependants to sink into perdition. "I will tear them from your arms," when you will be left destitute of support in time of need. God is offended, not only at the actual commission of sin, but also at the attempt to deliver by any means of man's own device. Such an attempt is a reflection on His *clemency*, as requiring more than is necessary for the satisfaction of justice; it is a reflection upon His *wisdom* in appointing His Son to suffer and die for no purpose, as the end might have been accomplished by easier and less painful means; it is a reflection upon His *veracity* as having given declarations inconsistent with the real state of things; it is a reflection upon His *power*, as being unable to save without an elaborate system of means which would in such a case be perfectly useless. Regarding these and other attested truths we find no difficulty in proving that God is against our pillows, and that He will tear them from under our arms. Then, brethren, may we relinquish them in time, resting on nothing but Christ, forsaking the sin that doth so easily beset us, and devoting ourselves to the obedience of faith and love.

The Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity.

MORNING SERVICE.—First Lesson: Ezek. xiv.

Verse 20.—“*Though Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, as I live, saith the Lord God, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter; they shall but deliver their own souls by their righteousness.*”

GRIEVOUS sins bring grievous plagues. In proportion to the number and magnitude of the sins will be the punishment awarded. Sin, in its mildest aspect, is exceeding offensive to God, and it incurs a penalty corresponding to its aggravation; but when that sin is repeated in defiance to admonitions and warnings the penalty receives a renewed impetus at every commission until ultimately it falls with a force that involves unavoidable and irretrievable ruin. In like manner when a sin is the act of one single individual, the punishment is confined to that individual (unless, indeed, it be committed by a person in high station, such as a king or a governor, then those connected with him are included in the temporal punishment, still the spiritual punishment is confined to himself). When a family is implicated in a sin, the punishment falls upon the family; and when a sin extends to a nation, the whole of that nation is under the ban of the divine displeasure.

Should it be asked, When does a sin become national? there would be some difficulty in answering the question. It is certain that it may be pretty generally committed, and even persons of influence in a country may be implicated in the guilt, without its incurring the character of a national sin. We might presume that two things would be necessary to constitute it such; first, its being encouraged by the executors of the law; and, secondly, its being connived at by the

ministers of the altar. When this is the case the nation partakes of the guilt, and the nation must partake in the punishment. The sin of the Jews at the time to which this chapter refers, which consisted in idolatry, disobedience, and utter disregard of the laws of God, partook fully of this character, and was consequently a national sin. They also increased gradually in wickedness, going from bad to worse, from one stage to another, until we find them here sunk into such depths of iniquity that by an irrevocable decree the judgment is denounced against them to the utmost of its virulence. Their sin was not confined to an individual nor to a family, but the King, the governors, the priests, and the prophets were equally guilty. Their cup of iniquity was full, and they had to drink its very dregs. When this chapter was penned by Ezekiel the greater portion of the nation had been taken into captivity, and those who were left took no warning, therefore, they also became a prey to their enemies. In the beginning of the chapter we find certain of the Elders of Israel coming to consult the prophet. Some think that those elders were the ambassadors whom Zedekiah had sent to Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon; and that they came to Ezekiel, not from any good motive, as coming to a prophet of Jehovah, but from a feeling of curiosity to consult him as they would consult an oracle of their idols respecting the welfare of their country. God warned the prophet of their hypocrisy, and announced the woful judgments on Jerusalem which are recorded in the chapter.

There are three important lessons to be learnt from those announcements. First, that God will punish for sin; secondly, that when the sin of a people is come to its crisis, and the decree has gone forth for their punishment, the piety and prayers of the best of men shall be unavailable to ward off the evil; thirdly, that though pious praying men shall not succeed to deliver others, yet they shall save their own souls.

I. God will punish for sin. He may, and does exercise great patience. His longsuffering is infinite, hence the reason

why the punishment is generally so long delayed. He first warns, then He threatens, giving every opportunity to the sinner to repent and improve. Like a kind father lifting up his hand to correct his erring child, the hand grasping the chastising rod ascends slowly higher and higher to see whether the child will relent and express his penitence, but if there be no indication of amendment the stroke must fall with an irrealisable force. He exercised great patience towards our first parents, death was threatened, but that death was postponed for some hundreds of years. In like manner he warned the antediluvians, and the Egyptians, and the Ninevites, and the Churches of Asia, and thus He still warns every sinner. The blow does not descend at once. There is a certain limit to which He allows the transgressor to go. The iniquity of the Amorites was not full in the time of Abraham, nor until four generations afterwards, but each generation added to its fullness, and it came at last. So the Jews were often warned and threatened, both by revelation and by minor punishments; each warning and threatening lifted the hand that held the sword; there was no amendment, and it fell. You sinners are also warned—you are warned by the law, you are warned by the Gospel, you are warned by the examples of others, you are warned by personal affliction, you are warned by bereavements, you are warned by the strivings of the Spirit in your consciences; God does not wish to punish you, but He must except you relent; sin is so repugnant to His nature. Light and darkness, justice and injustice, holiness and pollution, purity and impurity cannot coalesce. God would be inconsistent with Himself if He did not punish sin; the rights of His government would not be defended, the honour of His law would not be preserved, the veracity of His character would not be vindicated did He remit the punishment. Truly His love is so great towards the offender that he consented to allow the stroke to fall upon a substitute in the person of His own Son, but in that very act above all others He manifested the necessity of punishment.

God has various ways of punishing sin in this world. He

punished Adam by turning him out of Eden, and making him earn his bread by the sweat of his brow; He punished the antediluvians by water; He punished the Sodomites by fire; He punished the Egyptians by different plagues; He punished Korah, Dathan, and Abiram by an earthquake; He punished many of the Israelites in the wilderness by fiery serpents; He punished the Moabites and other nations by the sword. In this chapter He mentions "the sword, and the famine, and the pestilence, and the noisome beast." He has all things at His command—every beast and every element are subservient to His will.

The punishment is always in proportion to the privileges previously enjoyed. This was the reason why those combined judgments were threatened upon Jerusalem; even one of them would have been a grievous calamity to any nation, from the four escape was impossible. The phrase "How much more," in the twenty-first verse, signifies that Jerusalem had incurred a heavier judgment than any other city or country, on the principle that it had been previously raised to a higher position of prosperity by the special interposition of Providence in behalf of its inhabitants. It was on this principle our Saviour declared of the cities of Galilee that it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon and for Sodom in the day of judgment than for them; and on the same principle a heavier punishment will be inflicted on those who had enjoyed the privileges of the Gospel than on those heathen nations that had never been favoured with the knowledge of salvation through Christ.

We observe—

II. That when the sin of a people has come to a crisis, and the decree is gone forth for their punishment, the piety and prayers of the best men shall be of no avail to ward off the calamity, "Though Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, as I live, saith the Lord God, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter." This is a most solemn declaration, rendered still more awfully emphatic by being confirmed with God's oath,

"As I live, saith the Lord God." He swears by His own existence, which is unchangeable, that when the sentence has been pronounced, no power upon earth can avert the execution. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." It has availed to save individuals, and to rescue nations; it has availed to heal the sick, and to raise the dead; but when an individual or a nation goes beyond a certain limit in sin, even the fervent prayer of a righteous man cannot prevail. It must be an extreme case—more so than the case of the Israelites in the wilderness, rebellious as they were, for the prayer of Moses prevailed in their behalf—more so than the case of the Sodomites, deeply as they had sunk in crime, for if there had been found there ten righteous men, the whole of the cities should have been saved for their sakes. Seldom, we should hope, men go so far in wickedness that they are placed beyond the pale of forgiveness in this world. Whilst life lasts, we entertain a hope of pardon from a merciful God. But there may be instances like that of the inhabitants of Jerusalem when individuals and nations are so far left to themselves as to become too degraded and wicked for even God's grace to rescue them. God's Spirit will not always strive with man; a series of means are graciously employed, ample opportunities for amendment are patiently afforded, and the strongest encouragements to seek the truth are mercifully given; but when those are persistently despised and rejected, the sentence pronounced over Ephraim of old is still enforced. "Ephraim is joined to idols; *let him alone.*" Such was the extremity into which the Jewish nation had gone at this time. They had sinned away every hope of pardon, and the most earnest intercession of the best men could not prevail to remit the judgment. There are three men here mentioned who surpassed all others in their day for faith, integrity, devotion, and uniform obedience. In the first verse of the fifteenth chapter of Jeremiah, Moses and Samuel are named in the like manner. These three are probably mentioned to combine together the piety and earnestness of all the previous

ages and dispensations of the world. Noah lived before the flood, probably interceded in behalf of the wicked antediluvians, and was the means of saving at least his own family by his righteousness. Of the real history of Job very little is known, beyond what is recorded in the Book called after his name, for he is nowhere else mentioned in Scripture except in this place, and in the Epistle of St. James, where he is held up as an example of patience worthy of imitation. He is, however, supposed to have been contemporary with Abraham, or to have lived at some period between the time of Abraham and the giving of the law by Moses; thus he existed under a dispensation distinct from both the antediluvian and the Mosaic. What we read of him is that he was "perfect and upright, one that feared God, and eschewed evil." The following passages show how highly he was favoured by the Almighty, and the success of his intercession for others. "And it was so, that after the Lord had spoken these words unto Job, the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends; for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath. Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks, and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering, and my servant Job shall pray for you, for him will I accept; lest I deal with you after your folly, in that ye have not spoken of me the thing which is right, like my servant Job. So Eliphaz the Temanite, and Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite, went and did according as the Lord commanded them: the Lord also accepted Job." Daniel was now living, and had been fourteen years in captivity. No one of his age had manifested more disinterested consecration of soul to the service of God, or more ardent love for His worship. God honoured him by saving all the "magicians, astrologers, and Chaldeans" in Babylon on his account. But though Noah had been favoured with success in prayer before the flood, Job after the flood, before the institution of the Jewish economy, and Daniel under that economy, yet if the three

had joined together, bringing the piety of all the previous ages of the world to petition the throne of God, it would have been inefficient to remove the impending judgment from the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Ah! brethren, it is an awful thing to have so exhausted the patience of God that the united prayers of all good people cannot ward off His displeasure. Such persons must endure inconceivable misery in this world, and irremediable woe in the world to come.

III. We are taught in the text that though righteous men cannot succeed to deliver the wicked, yet they shall save their own souls by their righteousness.

By the word soul we are to understand—

1. The life, or the whole of man consisting of soul and body, which intimates that the righteous shall be providentially delivered from the calamitous judgments that often befall their unrighteous neighbours. This was the case with Noah, who was delivered from the universal deluge that swept away all except himself and his family for his sake. This was the case with Lot, who was delivered from the catastrophe that destroyed all the inhabitants of the plain of Sodom. Many instances might be mentioned, but there is one remarkable fact connected with the final destruction of Jerusalem which ought not to be omitted. Among the thousands of Jews that suffered the most horrible tortures and death during that melancholy event, there was not a single Christian involved in the calamity. This is to be accounted for in a very simple way. In Matt. xxiv. 15, 16, we read that Christ told his followers, "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand :) then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains." They did understand, and obeyed the injunction, which was the means of their escape. We know not from how many temporal dangers and calamities we may be delivered by living a life of holiness, but we know that a life of sin leads to poverty, to sickness, to innumerable troubles,

and to death; and we know also that God has promised to grant special protection to those who fear Him.

2. By the word soul we are to understand the immortal part of man; the part which is most valuable—most durable, the part which shall exist and be capable of enduring pleasure or pain, happiness or misery, when the body shall have fallen into decay. The souls of the righteous in this sense are saved under all circumstances. For some wise purposes God does often please to involve the righteous in the temporal calamities of the wicked; as Daniel and Ezekiel, with many others, were taken into captivity with the wicked Jews, and as many have suffered dire sorrows and troubles in the world without respect to their goodness and devotion; but nothing can interfere with their communion with God, nor effect their eternal salvation. "They shall deliver their own souls by their righteousness."

Whatever meaning you may attach to the word righteousness in this passage, in the Gospel acceptance of the term it does not mean *meritorious* uprightness of character, but an acceptance obtained by the exercise of faith in the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ. The righteousness of Noah, Daniel, and Job partook of the same nature, for St. Paul tells us that all the ancient worthies lived and died by faith. Their faith in God through the promised Saviour established their righteousness, which was carried out in those acts of goodness for which they were so eminent.

In conclusion, we see the danger of a continued course in sin. We must not calculate too much upon the mercy and patience of God, for if we persist in presumptuous sin, abusing His mercy and patience, like the inhabitants of Jerusalem we shall be surprised with a punishment that nothing can prevent. Let us therefore in time seek the prayers of others, and pray for ourselves that we may obtain that righteousness by which our souls may be saved.

The Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity.

EVENING SERVICE.—Second Lesson: 1 Cor. viii.

Verse 13.—“*Wherefore if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.*”

ST. PAUL's teaching was peculiarly adapted to the necessities of the people whom he taught. Those Corinthian Christians being only recently emerged from the darkness of heathenism, were still in the twilight of Christian principles, and could not clearly distinguish between the worship of the true God and that of the false deities to which they had been accustomed. Some of them were further advanced in knowledge than others, and therefore presumed from their knowledge to practise things which were an occasion of offence, or of sin to their weaker brethren. The Pagan nations in those days, as at the present, had a vast number of deities which they represented by idols; it is said that the gods of the Romans were upwards of thirty thousand, some of which were supposed to be in heaven, and others on earth. In their different towns, as in Corinth, they had gorgeous temples built for the worship of those gods, their idols were placed on pedestals, and sacrifices of different animals offered by the worshippers in the temples. When a sacrifice was offered a portion was burnt on the altar of the deity, a portion given for the use of the priests, and the remainder was reserved by the worshippers. The latter portion was either consumed by him and his friends at their respective homes, or a public banquet was made on the occasion, or else it was exposed for sale in the public market. In either case it was regarded by them as

having been consecrated, inasmuch as it was a part of the sacrifice. Now, the Corinthians had evidently inquired of the apostle respecting the lawfulness of Christians partaking of food thus consecrated in the temple of an idol. It was one of the disputes which unfortunately existed in that Church. Some, boasting their superior knowledge, argued that it was lawful, as an "idol is nothing in the world," to sanctify or to pollute the food, therefore they could conscientiously partake of it without any regard to the worship of the idol, whilst others not able to disunite the eating from the worshipping were led into sin by following the example of their stronger brethren. In this chapter St. Paul discusses the subject, taking up and confuting the arguments of those who were in favour of the practice. The chief argument was that they had knowledge sufficient to distinguish the difference between the worship of God and the worship of idols: they knew that an idol was nothing except a representation of an unseen object, and they being Christians, having forsaken the imaginary objects which the idols represented, and having dedicated themselves to the worship of the true God, there was no danger or harm in eating the meat which had been consecrated by the idolaters in the idols' temple. This is answered by showing that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing; it fosters pride and selfishness, and encourages an utter disregard for the welfare of others. "Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth." It was not safe to rely on knowledge only in such a case, since the tendency of mere knowledge was to puff men up and to make them proud; but they ought rather to act from charity or love. Love to God and their fellow-Christians would be the safer guide, for though some of them had this knowledge, yet all did not possess it, and the ignorant might be injured.

Another argument in favour of partaking of that food is alluded to in the eighth verse, namely, that it must be a matter of indifference in the sight of God, with whom all depended upon moral purity and holiness of heart, whether a man had eaten meat or not, and that they were neither the better

nor worse for it; to which the apostle replies, that in the abstract that might be true, still it might be the occasion of leading others to sin, as the effect on a weak brother would lead him to suppose that an idol was something, and that the practice of eating in the temple was an act of worship to the idol, consequently a Christian of little information and experience might be drawn away to perdition. It would be a sin against Christ if a feeble Christian should be thus destroyed. Therefore the apostle comes to the conclusion respecting himself that if indulgence in meat was in any way the occasion of making another sin he would eat no meat, whether it had been consecrated to idols or not, as long as the world stood, since to abstain was a far less evil than the injury or destruction of an immortal soul.

There are two subjects suggested in the text which we shall briefly consider. First, that some things which appear innocent in themselves become evil when the practice of them gives an occasion of offence to others. Secondly, that it is the duty of Christians in matters of liberty to adopt that course which will give the least occasion of sin to their brethren.

I. That some things which appear innocent in themselves become evil when the practice of them gives an occasion of offence to others.

By offence here, I do not mean the feeling of displeasure which may be felt by one at the conduct of another, but that conduct which may embolden the mind of another to abuse a thing which might be in itself lawful. That such a consequence might occur we need not wait to examine, for the examples of both Scripture and experience produce instances which cannot be denied.

1. One instance is supplied by the practice of image worship. An image of whatever material it may be composed seems to be in itself a very innocent thing, and may be admired as an ornament in either house or temple. It is capable of neither good nor evil. The better classes, even among heathen worshippers, attach no virtue to the idol itself,

but use it as a representation of the deity which they profess to adore, and offer their devotions, not to the idol, but through the medium of the idol to their imaginary god. But the ignorant portion of the worshippers are not able to ascend beyond the visible image, and offer to it the adorations intended to what they consider to be a higher being. I do not mention this as intending to defend the innocence of any portion of heathen worship, for it is all evil, the offspring of superstitious ignorance, and the instigator of criminal action. From this practice has arisen an equally delusive one, which is extensively practised in a portion of the Christian Church. When you see an image of the Saviour, of the Virgin Mary, or of the Cross of Calvary stuck up in a church or chapel, there may be no harm whatever in the thing itself, and if it be placed there merely as a reminder or an ornament, it needs not be objected against, but when it is bowed to, kneeled before, and prayers and incense offered to it, then it "becomes a stumbling-block to them that are weak." It may be argued that those genuflections are not intended for the images, but for the objects which they represent; it may be so in respect to the better informed portion of the worshippers of Christ, but the most ignorant may not be able to ascend above the image, and that adoration which ought to be presented to the Divine Being is confined to the silver or the bronze composing the image. The brazen serpent, which was preserved for ages by the Israelites in commemoration of the wonderful cure from the bite of the fiery serpent in the wilderness, was perfectly harmless as a relic and a reminder; but when it became an object of divine adoration by the idolatrous Jews, the pious Hezekiah saw it necessary to break it to pieces and call it *Nehushtan*. It was for this reason that Moses in recapitulating the law to the people before his departure from them said, "Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves," &c. &c., Deut. iv. 16—19. God knew and taught Moses that any similitude would be a stumbling-block to the people, therefore every likeness or image was strictly prohibited.

2. Some amusements that might be in themselves innocent become an evil when taken in connexion with their tendency and consequences. Recreation of some kind may be considered absolutely needful for the exercise of the body, or for the relaxation of the cares and toils to which it is subjected in passing through life. The numerous indoor and outdoor games which are now so universally practised are justly regarded harmless recreations when confined merely to the improvement of health and the promotion of real happiness, but when they are employed for the purposes of gambling and the wasting of time they become a snare, a sin, and a ruin. How many promising youths who were the pride of their friends, the hope of their families, and would have been an ornament and a blessing to society, have been led astray by those seemingly innocent amusements, and have been reduced to wretchedness both here and hereafter! The theatre and the ballroom, the billiard-board and the card-table, and even the chess and draft-board have woven the shrouds of millions. When first they were tempted by the apparent innocency of the practice they never dreamt that their death knell was at that moment sounded in the echo of the dice-box or the billiard-ball, but step by step they were allured onward until an infamous death and degrading grave closed up the scene of their crimes in this world, and opened the door of their perdition in the world to come. Yes, that amusement which involved no harm in itself led to sin and to death.

3. The practice of eating and drinking, which is not only innocent but necessary for the preservation of life leads to evil when immoderately indulged in. Gluttony reduces a person to the level of the brute, but drunkenness reduces him to the level of the fiend. Of all the practices of the world, that of drinking to excess has destroyed the greatest number of victims. Other evils have destroyed their thousands, but this has destroyed its millions, and when you multiply those millions by others the product will not be too high to represent the slain of drunkenness. What it is that fills our poor-houses and gaols? what is it that fanishes children and

clothes them with rags? what is it that empties houses of furniture and comfort, and fills them with filth and wretchedness? what is it that undermines the constitution of the body and breaks down the strongest frame in the prime of manhood and womanhood? what is it that deprives so many of reason, and drives them to commit suicide? what is it that plunges a soul of incalculable value into the depths of misery without the hope of recovery? It is this awful practice of drunkenness which we witness in every street, nearly on every day of the year. No language can describe, no artist can paint, no heart can conceive the extent of the evil which this one sin involves. Still no one intends to be a drunkard; the innocent moderate quantity is at first indulged in, which increases gradually and ends ruinously; joining the convivial feast, or accompanying a friend to the public-house appears to the mind of an inexperienced youth to be attended by no harm, but it often proves the first step to the dissipation which generates guilt and leads to irretrievable punishment.

We observe—

II. That it is the duty of Christians in matters of liberty to adopt that course which will give the least occasion of sin to others. "Wherefore," says Paul, "if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no meat while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend." This was a noble resolution, worthy of an apostle, and worthy of the imitation of every Christian. Our Christianity is proved by such acts of charity, not merely that charity which contributes to the relief of others, but that charity or love which will actuate an act of self-denial for the sake of others, at whatever sacrifice of feeling to ourselves. He who will not abridge his Christian liberty to preserve his brother from temptation and sin, forfeits the name of Christian. However we may be satisfied as to the lawfulness of the action, yet we ought to deny ourselves in some things rather than by our example to be the means of drawing others astray. Nothing is of greater value than a correct Christian example; whilst this may be

applied to all, it applies especially to those who are in the more elevated ranks of life. The ignorant will be likely to follow the example of the learned—the poor will imitate the rich—children will copy the manners of their parents. Therefore, even in things which may not be in themselves unlawful, they should, under these circumstances, set an example of self-denial, of plainness, of abstinence for the sake of others beneath them. They should live in a manner that it would be safe and right for all to tread in their footsteps.

Three questions should be asked by every Christian to form a guide for action.

1. How did Christ act? Examine his life. He lived “not to please Himself.” Though He was rich, yet He so lived that all might safely imitate Him; though He was honoured of God, and was exalted to the highest station as the Redeemer of the world, yet He so lived that all in every rank might follow Him—though He had all power, and was worshipped by angels, yet He so lived that He might teach the most humble and lowly how to live. So should every person in high station—so should every noble and learned man live—so should every minister of the gospel live—so should every head of a family live—so should every man of age and wisdom live, that others may learn of them *how* to live, that they may safely walk in the way pointed out to them.

2. How did St. Paul act? His conduct marks a great, a disinterested, and magnanimous spirit—a spirit seeking the good of all, supremely anxious for the glory of God and the salvation of man—a spirit that could make personal comfort and gratification subservient to the welfare of others. This is rare Christianity; how seldom is it practised! Paul did not form this resolution because he was impressed with the unlawfulness of eating meat, but because he was impressed that, though lawful, his example might be the occasion of sin unto others. This may be applied to Christians of the present day in many things which are practised amongst them. Some we have already mentioned, such as amusements, entertainments, and the use of intoxicating drinks. You may

be safe at a festival, or a public dinner, or a large convivial party; *you* may be safe in practising some games for the amusement of yourself and friends; *you* may be safe in the use of wine and other fermented liquors: but all do not possess the same strength of resolution, or have the same knowledge or discretion as *you*; they have been led by your example to do the same, and have fallen into sin. Would it be right for you to continue the practice under the circumstances? Would Christ have done it? Would St. Paul have done it? Take *them* for *your* example, then you can stand forth as a safe example to others.

3. The third question to be asked is, What does my Christian profession require from me? You will find, I think, that it requires "every man to look not on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." You will find, I think, that it requires we should "bear one another's burden, and so fulfil the law of Christ." You will find, I think, that "we that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves." Such are the principles to which we subscribed in our baptismal and confirmation vows, which vows we confirm each time we approach the Lord's Table. Does our conduct bear them out? Can we afford to be exclusive from the world for the sake of others? Can we sacrifice the gratification of our own feelings although they be lawful in themselves, lest we place a stumbling-block in the way of our weaker brethren? If all Christians possessed Paul's delicate sensibilities, and Paul's strength of Christian virtue, and Paul's willingness to deny himself for the benefit of others, the aspect of the Christian world would soon be changed, many of the practices in which we now indulge would be abandoned, and every Christian would be seen setting such examples that all others could safely follow.

The Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity.

MORNING SERVICE.—Second Lesson : Mark iii.

Verse 29.—“ *But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation.*”

EVERY sin is an evil which incurs a penalty in proportion to its extent and aggravation. There are, however, gradations in sin, consequently there are gradations in punishment. For instance, a sin committed through the infirmity of the mind, when by the surprise of a sudden temptation, a person succumbs to the attack of an enemy without being previously warned of the danger, does not incur the same amount of punishment as a sin deliberately committed from a designed motive of gratifying an evil propensity. A sin committed against a man is less aggravated than a sin committed directly against God. A sin conceived in the mind is less aggravated than when it is reduced into practice by word or deed. An assault made on the person of an individual, is of less serious consequences than an assault made upon his character and public interests. Hence arises the difference in the extent of retributive justice. Such a distinction is borne out by our Saviour in the context. “ Verily, I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they may blaspheme ; But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation.” In the parallel passage in St. Matthew, it is added, “ And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him ; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.” The direct reference is to the conduct of

the Pharisees in attributing His power of working miracles to Beelzebub, whereas it was really done by the Spirit of God. Therefore they reproached and blasphemed the Divine power therein exhibited. He tells them that if they confined their reproaches to His person as man, their conduct would be pardonable. If they merely despised Him for His poverty, and meanness of birth, or merely censured Him as a gluttonous man, a winebibber, and a friend of publicans and sinners, they should be forgiven ; but if they blasphemed that Divine power by which He performed His mighty works, and attributed to the devil what belonged exclusively to the Holy Ghost, their condition was not only dangerous, but desperate, and if they continued to express such notions, contrary to the convictions of their better informed minds, their state would become hopeless, having no prospect of forgiveness under any dispensation in this world or the next.

The subject introduced to us in the text is what is called the unpardonable sin, or blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, or as St. John calls it, "a sin unto death." We shall therefore enquire, First, In what does this sin consist? and secondly, Why is it unpardonable?

I. In what does this unpardonable sin consist?

This is a subject of rare importance. May we be favoured with Divine light to treat it consistently. Our Saviour declares that "all (other) sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men." However aggravated their form—however frequent their repetition, they are not beyond the pale of forgiveness. "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." But He Himself has made this one exception, and it is the only one within the Christian code, varied and comprehensive as it is ; and observe even this one is made in a very qualified form. He does not say, he that shall *sin*, but he that shall *blaspheme* against the Holy Ghost. We have all *sinned* against the Holy Ghost ; when we resist Him as our Guide—our Comforter—our Sanctifier—our Helper, we

sin against Him. All those who *grieve* the Spirit, *quench* the Spirit, *tempt* the Spirit, and endeavour to *shake off* the convictions of the Spirit from the conscience, sin against Him. Each of us has done this times out of number. We do it whenever the voice of conscience is hushed—whenever we commit a sin contrary to our convictions—whenever our evil propensities have the ascendancy over our knowledge.

The term employed here is *blaspheme*. Blasphemy is the act of the tongue, and it is the most abominable act of which the tongue is capable; it is an index of the deepest depravity of the human mind—an overflow of the most pernicious malignity of the human heart. To slander a neighbour is a crime akin to felony, to slander a friend is the height of wicked ingratitude, to slander God in the operations of His Spirit, is an unpardonable sin.

The offence therefore, is blasphemy; not blasphemy against God in His Majesty and attributes, but against Him in the operations of His Spirit on the heart of man. In the former case it is pardonable for the reason that no slanderous language of man can effect the least injury or change upon His Divine Being; in the latter case, such language tends to destroy the work intended for man's salvation.

The combination of two dispositions seems to be absolute to compose this sin; first, a thorough conviction in the mind of the reality of the Spirit's work and office as declared in the Gospel; and secondly, a malicious determination to oppose the truth contrary to that conviction. In this view of the case we have but one instance in Scripture of a person incurring the guilt, and that was the case of Judas Iscariot. He was, according to his own testimony, convinced of the Saviour's true Messiahship, but still such was the malicious perfidy of his heart that he consented to sell Him as a deceiver and impostor. When Peter denied his Lord, he was guilty of sinning contrary to the convictions of an enlightened mind, but he did it from the lack of resolution to withstand the shock of temptation, and not from a feeling of hatred and malice against Christ. Paul, in writing to Timothy says, that

he was "a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious!" but that he obtained mercy, because he did it ignorantly in unbelief. Had the sin of Peter and the sin of Paul met together in one person, the unpardonable sin of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost would have been committed, but inasmuch as the one sinned against knowledge, but not out of malice, and the other sinned maliciously, but in ignorance, both "obtained mercy." Paul had openly blasphemed Christ and the "ministration of the Spirit," or the gospel; but before his conversion, he had probably never seen the one, nor fully heard the other; consequently he had not been an eye-witness of the miracles which Christ performed through the power of the Spirit; nor had he been conversant with the substance of the gospel; had he been, it may be inferred from the tenor of his words that he could not have "obtained mercy," but that his blasphemy against the ministration of the Spirit would have been unpardonable.

Some think that St. Paul refers to this sin in the tenth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, where he says, "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries." In this case an open blasphemous apostasy would succeed a previous knowledge and profession of the truths of the gospel under the guidance of the Spirit. Such was the sin of Julian of whom we read in Ecclesiastical history, who having been baptized, educated, and confirmed in, and who having publicly professed the principles of Christianity, basely apostatized, blasphemously ridiculed, and cruelly persecuted those principles. Such a man sinned *wilfully* after that he had received the knowledge of the truth, therefore placed himself beyond the pale of forgiveness by his wicked conduct against the truth. Can it be wondered at, that a person of that character perished miserably, and was compelled with his dying breath to acknowledge, "O Galilean, thou hast con-

quered." The following two verses in the tenth of the Hebrews tend to prove that the apostle referred to this sin. "He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" (Heb. x. 28—29.) The comparison is most striking. The person who was proved by attested witnesses to commit a capital crime out of contempt to the authority of the Jewish law, was condemned to death, and no power upon earth could save him, unless God mercifully interposed in his behalf, as He did in the case of David. How then can escape be possible for a man who contemptuously places under his foot the blood of God's Son, and despitefully treats the operations of God's Spirit? "From blindness of heart, and contempt of thy Word and commandment, Good Lord deliver us." Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost therefore consists in a vicious public slander of the influences of the gospel, arising from a malicious feeling against its author and a desire to nullify its operations.

We shall enquire—

II. Why is the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost unpardonable?

It is not because God's mercy is limited, nor because the virtue of Christ's atonement is inefficient, but because man thus makes himself incapable of receiving forgiveness on God's terms.

1. It casts contempt on the whole of God's arrangements respecting this world. Whether we regard His arrangements of Providence, or His arrangements of Grace, the agency of the Spirit is employed to perform His will, and to effect His designs. The Spirit strives with man. Through His operations man is preserved, defended, protected. Every extraordinary dispensation of mercy is especially attributed

to the work of the Spirit. The Spirit strove with man before the deluge—the Spirit guided the Israelites—the Spirit spoke through the prophets—the Spirit wrought the miracles—the Spirit taught the apostles—the Spirit converted the minds of the thousands on the day of Pentecost—the Spirit applies all the graces of the gospel to the soul in every age. All this He has done, and is doing by the appointment of infinite wisdom which has never erred, and cannot direct but that which tends to further the best ends in promoting the glory of God, and the welfare of man. If you despitefully treat His agency, you reflect upon the wisdom that ordained it, and magnify yourselves above God. Let us suppose a case: If a sovereign of consummate wisdom appointed means for the safety and comfort of his subjects, committed them to the charge of an agent equal to himself in essence, in knowledge, and in purity, so that no error can possibly occur in their application: then suppose those subjects, or any portion of them, were to speak contemptibly of that agent in the presence of the sovereign, and deprecate the means which he employs; would not that be an unpardonable insult to him as having engaged his wisdom in appointing means, and an agent unworthy of his subjects? Apply this to God in an infinite higher degree, and how can it be expected that He will forgive such unpardonable contempt?

2. The agency of the Holy Ghost is the only agency for man's salvation. If the light of the Spirit, by which alone the mind is enlightened to see the evil of sin, and the way to escape from it be quenched, no other can be procured to guide you to safety; if the fire of the Spirit by which alone the corruptions of the heart are consumed, be extinguished, no other can be procured to purge you from iniquity. This sin involves a total rejection of the sacrifice of Christ as an atonement for transgression, for the Holy Ghost bears testimony to the efficacy of that sacrifice as the only means of our reconciliation with God. The apostle emphatically tells

the Hebrews that if they sin wilfully in rejecting His sacrifice after receiving knowledge of the truth, "there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin." God has no other Son to offer—no other Spirit to give, to make the sacrifice effectual in your salvation; so that when persons by a voluntary relinquishment of the gospel, and a malicious contempt of the application of the blood of Christ, forfeit an interest in His sacrifice, there is no other way appointed for their relief by the expiation of sin for ever. If the Holy Spirit be despised, and finally rejected, no ground of hope can be entertained for such despisers. The consequence is eternal damnation. He that is guilty of such blasphemy, our Saviour declares, "hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation." "This" is the fiery indignation which St. Paul declares "shall devour the adversaries." The expression is metaphorical, taken from the destructive nature of fire; it devours and consumes all combustible matter with which it comes in contact. What it is intended to show is, the inevitable, unavoidable, and terrible destruction that will be produced by God's indignation. Differently from natural fire, this will not destroy the substance and being of the soul, but it will destroy all its happiness—its blessedness—its hopes—its comforts; it will eternally prey upon its being, and never consume its consciousness; it has the property always to torture, but never to kill; or always to kill, but never to consume: it is *eternal* damnation."

We cannot dismiss the subject without a word of encouragement to those persons of tender consciences who think that they have been guilty of the unpardonable sin. Some express a fear that they have sinned against the Holy Ghost; and consequently refuse the comforts of the gospel to the "weary and heavy laden." If they were asked whether they have spoken blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, of which only this sin is composed, they would view it in a different aspect; feeling that their fears are groundless, their tears may be wiped away, for there is hope even for them. None

need despair except those who, contrary to the convictions of their own minds, wickedly persist in declaring that the gospel is fabulous, and that the operations of the Spirit are a falsehood. "All other sins," our Lord affirms, "shall be forgiven to the sons of men." Then let us take courage, and pray to be kept from this hopeless blasphemy.

The Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity.

EVENING SERVICE.—First Lesson : Ezek. xxiv.

Verse 27.—“ *In that day shall thy mouth be opened to him which is escaped, and thou shalt speak, and be no more dumb : and thou shalt be a sign unto them ; and they shall know that I am the Lord.* ”

THERE are seasons when God's special messengers' mouths are closed in communication to man. His voice in creation and providence is never silent. “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy work : day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.” There is not a day nor a night in which God does not speak to us through those mediums ; but this is His ordinary language which is uttered in common to all. In addition to this He has extraordinary communications which are given through special messengers, whom He raises for the sole purpose. Those messengers vary according to the changes of dispensations. Formerly He employed angels on peculiar occasions, sometimes dreams and visions were the medium, more commonly prophets were raised up to declare His will. Under the Gospel dispensation the messengers employed are the ministers of the word, who are commanded to go forth with the Bible in their hands warning man of his danger, and inviting him to return from his evil ways, that he may obtain pardon, and peace, and life. When these messengers are withdrawn, as they were from the apostate churches of Asia, or when through a continued rejection of the message the voice of conscience is hushed, so that the man sinks into indifference and hardness of heart, it is a sure sign of God's displeasure, and that man must beware lest he be given up to irremediable perdition. The prophet Ezekiel was a special

messenger sent to the Jewish people at the commencement of the Babylonian captivity. A portion of them had been taken from their country, the remainder were now warned and expostulated with, but continuing relentless and obstinate the expostulations were discontinued, and they were left to observe their own inclinations. In the twenty-sixth verse of the third chapter God tells His prophet, "And I will make thy tongue cleave to the roof of thy mouth, that thou shalt be dumb, and shalt not be to them a reprover: for they are a rebellious house." Whether Ezekiel was struck actually dumb as Zecharias was for a season is not certain; the object was to withhold any communication from the people by the restraint of prohibition, which was a heavy judgment to avenge their rebellion and ingratitude. He was also to be bound and shut up for a season, which was designed as a miraculous interposition of heaven to represent the prostrate and humbled state of the people deserted by their God. This state of the prophet continued for the space of three years, or until he received the tidings of Jerusalem being finally taken and destroyed by the army of Nebuchadnezzar, under the command of Nebuzaradan. But God would not keep His anger for ever; those who escaped were to come to the prophet for instruction, and the text contains a promise that the Divine communications should be resumed. "In that day shall thy mouth be opened to him which is escaped, and thou shalt speak, and be no more dumb: and thou shalt be a sign unto them: and they shall know that I am the Lord."

The opening of the prophet's mouth furnishes us with an emblem of God's gracious communications to man, which may be considered under two heads. First, the contents; and secondly, the results of those communications.

I. We shall consider the contents of God's special communications. When He sends a messenger He gives him a message to deliver, and that message must be delivered with all fidelity as coming from God and not from man; it is to be delivered in the name of God, by the authority of God, and

to the glory of God. "Now then," says the Apostle Paul, "we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

The message may be comprised in three words, which are, *warning*, *escape*, and *duty*—words of the widest import, comprehending all that God is to man, and all that God requires from man.

1. When the messenger's mouth is opened he is to *warn*. Warn against sin, and warn of danger; against sin as being the cause of the danger, and of the danger as being the inevitable result of the sin. Now, every man is a sinner; this is a part of the message: being a sinner every man is in danger of punishment, which is to suffer the displeasure of an offended God for ever. Such was the contents of the message which God Himself delivered to Adam, and the same is continued throughout the whole of the chapter. Noah preached it to the antediluvians, Abraham taught it to his family, Lot declared it to the Sodomites, Moses proclaimed it to the Israelites as well as to the Egyptians, the prophets shewed it to their respective generations, Christ announced it in His public ministry upon earth, the apostles held it forth prominently in all their discourses; and it is to be the first lesson in all our religious instructions—man is a sinner and is in danger of punishment. If we lose sight of this, we lose sight of the great necessity for the sufferings and death of the Son of God, we lose sight of the bane whence originates all the evil that exists in the world, we lose sight of the reason for the depraved propensities which exist in the heart, and the untold miseries which afflict the mind; we lose sight of the necessity for a Redeemer, for "the whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." Deny this fact, and you deny your real position as moral agents, you deny God's claim to the services of His creatures, you deny the relationship between Him and yourselves, you deny the responsibility of a rational being, you deny the existence of heaven and hell, you deny the connection between crime and penalty, you deny that there is any

truth in the book which is emphatically called the *Word* of God. You may as well deny that water drowns, that fire burns, that fever inflames the blood, that disease produces death. Conscience and experience, past and present, prove that man is a sinner, and is in danger of punishment. Of this fact God's message warns you—disregard it at your peril.

2. There is a way of escape, mercifully pointed out in the message, which is committed to the messenger. Man is not allowed to grope in the dark being told of his danger, then left to find a way of escape from it by his own ingenuity and effort. We have the antidote presented to us as well as the bane, a place of refuge as well as a sense of danger. If the world was to be drowned, an ark was appointed for Noah's safety; if fire and brimstone were to burn Sodom and Gomorrah, Lot was directed to Zoar for escape; if the destroying angel killed the firstborn of the Egyptians, the blood of the lamb secured the Israelites; if those people were bitten by the fiery serpents in the wilderness, the serpent of brass was placed on a pole to cure the effect; if the avenger of blood had power to kill the manslayer, the city of refuge was provided to save him from the attack; if God threatened Adam with death in consequence of his disobedience, He presented to him a prospect of life in the promise that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. He has not yet withdrawn the promise of life through the woman's seed, but graciously extends the blessing of hope in Christ and Him crucified. Whilst He tells us in the message that "in Adam all died," He tells us also that "in Christ shall all be made alive." Whilst He tells us that "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God," He tells us also that "He has exalted Christ a Prince and a Saviour, for to give redemption unto Israel and forgiveness of sins." Whilst He tells us that "by the offence of one judgment came upon all men unto condemnation," He tells us also that "even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." Here is a foundation on which we may safely build our hope, a rock on which we may firmly stand, a refuge to

which we may confidently flee ; for " God in Christ reconciles the world to himself, not imputing their transgressions unto them." If you wish to escape the danger you may ; there is no impediment on the part of God ; He waits to be gracious, and invites you to come unto Him that you may have life.

3. There is also a duty contained in the message. The path of duty is the path of safety. No one can expect to realise the benefit of pardon and life except he attend to the conditions on which they are offered. Ezekiel was to be a sign to the remnant of the Jews that escaped. In his person were represented contrition, belief, and obedience, showing the necessity of such being possessed by them, before God would manifest His favours unto them. Their contrition was expressed in the humiliating postures which he assumed as well as the afflictive circumstances which he endured : their belief was expressed in the confidence which he reposed in the word of God ; and their obedience was expressed in his readiness to comply with the Divine command. These three parts of duty are still required from all who hope to obtain the safety presented in the Gospel. Being sinners, we need repentance : nothing can be more rational than when we have offended a friend we should express our sorrow in deep contrition of heart. God has been justly offended by our past sins : they have reflected upon His wisdom ; they have defied His authority ; they have abused His goodness ; they have cast contempt upon the agonies of His Son ; they have slighted and quenched His Spirit—it is only right, therefore, that we should manifest corresponding grief for such acts of ingratitude. If we thus repent, like Job, in dust and ashes, we exercise a firm belief in His word : whether that word contains a threat or a promise, to doubt it would be a mistrust of His truthfulness, and would preclude an implicit reliance on what He says. If you do not believe that you are such a deeply-dyed sinner as you are represented to be—that God's justice demands your punishment in a state of impenitence—that you may obtain mercy only by coming to God through Christ—and that your utmost goodness and

strength are inadequate to meet the requirements of the Divine law, you fail in the duty contained in the message, and you will be found wanting in the balances of the judgment-day. In addition to this, there is obedience necessary to all the precepts of the Gospel: not merely an outward formal obedience, but a hearty compliance with the commands arising from love to the Commander, and a pleasure in the performance. Let us always remember that when God opens the mouths of His messengers to speak, and not to be dumb, they are responsible for the contents of the message. If they forbear, they incur the penalty of blood. Be not offended at the messenger when he tells you the truth: he withholds it at his peril. God will call him to judgment, and he must appear there with clean hands, or bear the imputation of others' sins.

II. We have here the result of God's special communications—"and they shall know that I am the Lord."

This may be taken either in a way of threatening, or in a way of encouragement.

1. In a way of threatening. If they persisted in their obstinacy after the prophet's mouth was opened to resume the Divine communications, He would manifest His authority in such a manner as to compel them to submit unto Him. He had done so to those whom He had already punished: they were obliged to believe the words of the prophet when it was too late; and the same should occur to those who escaped, unless they attended to the sign of the prophet. The name **LORD** signifies authority and dominion. God's authority is unlimited: every angel in heaven, every devil in hell, every man on the earth, every beast in the forest, every bird in the air, every fish in the sea, every element in nature, every principle in science, every propensity in the heart, are all in His power. How can poor, insignificant man dare to magnify himself against Him! Who has done so and prospered? We have many examples of defiance to His authority, but we have not one of success. The most daring Pharaoh, and proud Nebuchadnezzar, and

presumptuous Herod, and persecuting Nero, have been compelled to succumb to His power. Persons may for a time be suffered by His forbearing patience to strengthen themselves against the Almighty, despising His communications, defying His power, and neglecting His rule; but the day will declare His right, when He will say, "and they shall know that I am the Lord."

2. The expression may be taken in a way of encouragement. If they attended to His word, and obeyed His commands, His power should be displayed in their protection and deliverance. This was verified in respect to those people. It is just to say of them that the captivity in Babylon cured them of their idolatry. Bad as they were, there was no more idol-worship witnessed amongst them from that time. Having cast away their idols, God was with them in the land of their captivity, and after their allotted seventy years' servitude had expired, He showed His power in restoring them to their own land. If He has authority to punish, He has also authority to forgive and deliver. No instrument raised against those who obey Him shall succeed to obstruct the way of their prosperity, or confound the designs formed for their happiness. The apostle Paul felt this when he said "and we know that all things shall work together for good to them that love God." And the apostle Peter felt it when he said, "and who is he that can harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" Yes; and we have a better authority than either in the words of our Saviour when He said, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Come weal, or come woe; come prosperity or come adversity; come wealth or come poverty; come health or come sickness; come life or come death; all things shall work together for good. "The young lions may lack and suffer hunger, but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing." Enemies may annoy and persecute, circumstances may try and harass, but "if God be for us, who can be against us?" "And they shall know that I am the Lord."

The Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity.

MORNING SERVICE.—First Lesson : Daniel iii.

Verse 28.—“ *Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God.*”

THE three persons mentioned here were youths taken by Nebuchadnezzar from Judea in the beginning of the fourth year of the reign of Jehoiakim. This was the first time Jerusalem had been taken by that king, when he carried away only a portion of the inhabitants as *hostages*, “with a part of the vessels of the house of God.” Daniel, Hannaniah, Mishael, and Azariah, being children belonging to the Royal family of Judah, were among the first number of captives. Finding that those four youths possessed superior talent and knowledge, the king ordered that they should be educated in the learning of Chaldea, intending them after a trial of three years’ training to hold positions of trust in the kingdom. The four had new names imposed upon them importing relations to the idols of Babylon. Daniel was called Belteshazzar; Hannaniah, Shadrach; Mishael, Meshach; and Azariah, Abed-nego. All the four soon excelled others in comeliness and learning. At the expiration of the allotted time they were admitted to attend the king, who found them superior to all the wise men of Babylon. Daniel’s goodness and wisdom were the first marked. He was established in the favour of the court by relating and interpreting the king’s dream, which all the

magicians and astrologers had failed to accomplish. Upon his rehearsal of the vision, Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged the supreme power and wisdom of the God of heaven, and promoted Daniel to the highest position in the realm; also at his request his companions were placed in situations of high honour in the province of Babylon. But such is the depravity of the human heart, unless governed by Divine grace, it soon forgets its real relationship and subjection to God. About sixteen years after this when Nebuchadnezzar returned from his conquest of one of the surrounding countries, he set up a monstrous idol in the plain of Dura, and ordered all his subjects, as soon as they heard the concert of music on the occasion, to fall down and worship the image. Daniel was then either absent from Babylon, or his elevated position made his enemies afraid to accuse him; but Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego were accused of insubordination to the king's command, which was a crime of high treason; upon being interrogated they declared their resolution not to worship the idol whatever might be the consequences. Enraged by their determined reply, Nebuchadnezzar ordered them to be bound and cast into the furnace of fire heated for the occasion to a seven-fold degree. The flame being so fierce caught hold of those who cast them into the fire and burnt them to ashes. But by the interposition of the "Son of God," who appeared walking with them in the furnace, the fire was only permitted to burn their bonds, and not so much as to singe their garments, or the hair of their heads. Nebuchadnezzar observing this called them to come forth, which they did, and were advanced to more honourable situations than before; the king also made a decree that if any one should speak reproachfully of the God of the Jews, whose power and majesty were so great, he should be put to death, and his house be turned into a dunghill. "Then Nebuchadnezzar spoke and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego," &c.

The subject which this circumstance suggests is the importance of decision of character in the service of God, which we find illustrated, first, in its nature; and secondly, in its benefits,

I. We have the nature of decision of character in the service of God brought before us in this circumstance.

By this decision I understand a firm, open resolution to stand for the honour of God, and to make a public profession of His cause in the face of every temptation and every opposition. A decided spirit to adhere to that which is right is commendable in every department of life, whilst a vacillating, easily-drawn-aside disposition is despicable to the utmost degree; but when the glory of God and the interests of immortality are in the balance, no excuse can be offered for swerving from a principle of conscientious conviction. The noble example of those three men stands forth as a monument of principle worthy of the imitation of the greatest as well as the least upon earth. The men of the world may call it pride, or obstinacy, or self-will, or exclusiveness, or self-righteousness, if they please; but God calls it religion—true, sterling religion implanted in the heart.

There were four things in these men's decision which we may especially observe.

1. They were not ashamed to be exclusive in the service of God. Every man, woman, and child on the plain of Dura fell down before the image that was set up. The princes and governors and all who held the highest positions in the realm prostrated themselves at the sound of the music; those Hebrews stood alone, the objects of scorn and the butts of derision; still they boldly encountered every sneer in defence of their religion. It is easy enough to join with the crowds when religion is fashionable, and the multitudes pass through the same forms of Divine worship; but to be virtuous among the vicious, to be pure amongst the corrupt, to be just amongst the unrighteous, to serve God alone amongst the sneers and jeers of all around, requires a resolution which nothing but God's grace can bestow. We can scarcely realize the feeling in this country where to worship God (in form at least) is the rule, and to be an infidel is the exception; if you were placed down in a country of idolaters where none but yourself entertained any reverence for the Divine Being, the case

would be different, and your real decision would then be tested. Still, there are many, even in this land of Gospel truth, and of Gospel profession, who are ashamed to acknowledge their religious convictions publicly, merely because the majority of their friends live in sin, and would ridicule them for their exclusiveness; like Nicodemus, they would come to Jesus, but it must be by night; or like Joseph of Arimathea, would be His disciple, but it must be secretly for fear of the Jews.

2. Those young men adhered to their principles in opposition to the mandate of their king. In matters of state they would not have taken the world to disobey his decree, but in a case of conscience between them and their God they shrunk not from the reply, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. Be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." We have a counterpart of this decision in the conduct of the apostles, when the priests and rulers of the Jews commanded them that they should speak henceforth no more in the name of Jesus. Peter and John answered them, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God judge ye." Our religion teaches us to be "subject to the powers that be," but if those powers step over the boundaries of right, and interfere with our subjection to God, we are justified in disobeying the former rather than the latter.

3. They continued firm in the prospect of a violent death. The king threatened them, "If ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of the burning fiery furnace: and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?" What an empty boast! O, vain man, how he forgets himself, and the confession which he had made a few years ago when his dream was interpreted by Daniel. "*The same hour*:" there shall be no respite, no time for reflection, no preparation for death. May it be so, "Be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods." They were resolved to die for God's cause rather than dishonour His name. They "counted not their lives dear unto them," the holy principles which they

professed could not be sold for life itself. Singular fortitude, and piety, and constancy. How worthy to be entered in the list of the cloud of witnesses who renounced all for the consciousness of being approved of God. Prominently will those men stand forth in a future day among the confessors and martyrs of after ages, who welcomed the cross of Christ, accompanied by death in its most formidable aspect, in preference to the smiles of the world purchased by the violation of a conscience free of offence. Beloved brethren, can our religion stand such a test? It has been hitherto nurtured in the sunshine of peace and liberty; a counterfeit might have stood any ordeal that we have been called upon to pass through. The true criterion of genuineness is persecution; if in the prospect of a threatened certain death we could hold fast our profession it would be a proof of its reality.

4. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego's resolution was the result of steadfast faith in God. "Our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of thine hand, O King." They entertained a confident trust, grounded upon either a special divine instinct, or upon the many examples of God's dealings with His servants, that He would deliver them by an interposition of His Providence. "But if not"—we know that He is able, His power extends over all things, every element is subservient to His will—but if it be more consistent with His glory that we should suffer, we are perfectly resigned. He will do what is right in the estimation of His unerring wisdom, and what will be best for us; therefore we are determined without any care—notwithstanding any danger, not to obey the idolatrous command. A rare instance of unwavering faith; such as could sustain the servants of God in running through all dangers. Faith of this nature is sufficient to support the mind in every difficulty; it is sufficient to sweeten the cup of bitter sorrow—to kindle the light of hope in the darkest night—and to soothe the troubled spirit in the midst of the direst afflictions of life.

We observe

II. The benefits of decision of character as represented in the circumstances before us.

I need not tell you of the benefits of decision generally, they are apparent in the transactions of every day life. It is this, connected with a persevering effort, has produced all the great boons which are realized by society. Commerce, art, science, literature, are all included in it. In its absence the statesman and the lawyer, the doctor and the preacher, the manufacturer and the merchant, the engineer and the architect, the farmer and the mechanic, could never carry out to perfection the object of their respective aims. We have lasting monuments of it in our constitution and in our institutions. Our churches and our chapels, our asylums and our schools, our houses and our vessels, our compass and our printing-press, our steam engines and our railways, our bridges and our aqueducts, our gas lights and our electric telegraph, are instances of its unconquerable power. None of these could have existed were it not for the firm decisive resolutions of the producers. Morally considered, the like benefits are produced. Temptations to evil are successfully resisted, oppositions to good are manfully encountered, prejudices and obstacles are finally overcome, and the man becomes an ornament to society—a blessing to the world.

Carry it out further in its highest bearing upon the disposition of the mind, which is that tending to the consecration of the soul to God, and the dedication of self to His service. The benefits of this are to be seen in the sequel of the decision of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego.

1. They were approved of God. He crowned and honoured them when they were despised and rejected of men; so great was the honour that the fire, which had not lost its power of burning, obeyed its Creator in not singeing as much as their hair and garments—so great was the honour that their bands were instantly consumed and they left unshackled in the midst of the fiery furnace—so great was the honour that the Son of God Himself condescended to come down and hold communion with them in the midst of the flames. The

seven-fold heated furnace was to them a seven-fold degree of happiness; the flame gleamed the radiance of glory; the seclusion of the devoted spot was to them a foretaste of heaven upon earth; the presence of the Son of God caused them to forget that there was a proud monarch, a malicious Chaldean, or an ingredient of sorrow in existence. Christ always honours those with His presence and fellowship who honour Him with their devotion and trust. Their extremity is His opportunity. He never forgets the promise, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee."

2. God was acknowledged and honoured by the proudest of men. The man who a short time since magnified himself above all restraint, is now perfectly convinced of the supreme power of the Most High. He who arrogantly asked the question, "And who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?" is now compelled to say, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not worship nor serve any god, except their own God." Not only did he acknowledge and bless God, but he also established a law for the defence of His honour. "Therefore I make a decree that every people, nation, or language which speak anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill: because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort." It was the best decree that he had ever made, worthy of the imitation of all Christian kings and governors.

3. It tended to the promotion of the men themselves. "Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego in the province of Babylon." "The righteous shall bear rule," and shall "inherit promotion." A decisive stand in the defence of God's glory and cause demands respect: even

the worst of men must acknowledge the power of a steadfast unwavering principle. They may reject his religion, but they value the worth of the man; he is the best fitted in their estimation to hold a position of trust and responsibility; they can confide in his honesty, and can feel assured of reaping the advantage of his truthfulness and fidelity.

We may make one remark in conclusion. Those who honour God by taking a firm stand for Him in all their transactions with men shall be amply rewarded for any sacrifice which they may be called upon to make.

The Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity.

EVENING SERVICE.—Second Lesson: 2 Cor. vi.

Verse 16.—“*And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.*”

WILL God in very deed dwell with man on the earth? Yes, but “the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands.” He does not confine himself to buildings of timber and stone; His buildings are the hearts of His people, there He delights to dwell. To such building we are referred in the text, and the reference is worthy of our attention. The argument of the apostle, is the necessity for Christians to separate themselves from the wicked and vicious world, which he establishes by an allusion to the impropriety of joining the temple of God with the temple of idols. On a former occasion we noticed the difference which existed in the Corinthian Church respecting meat consecrated in the idol’s temple, where St. Paul concluded that it was advisable to abstain from such, lest the strong should give an occasion of offence to the weak. Here he enters into the injurious tendency of an alliance between the worshippers of God and the worshippers of idols, and shows that they had nothing in common; their principles were different, their interests were different, their objects were different; how could they, therefore, unite except to the detriment and destruction of the newly born principles which the Christians professed! “Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.” The reference is to the custom of yoking animals of different species together in their work, and he implies that there is so great an incongruity between

believers and unbelievers, the impropriety of yoking them together is equal to that of animals of different kinds. This may include not only matrimonial alliance, but also a participation in any amusements or employments which are inimical to the holiness of the Christian character. The reasons for not having such intercourse were, "for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?" These arguments extend to Christians of all ages; if improper connections and friendship with the unbelieving world were wrong then, they are wrong still; not that we are precluded from joining others as neighbours, or citizens, or members of the same families. Commercial transactions, or professional engagements that are conducted on honest and honourable principles, literary and scientific pursuits, the love and affection which are due to relations and friends, plans of public improvements, and schemes for doing good, are never prohibited by the religion which we profess. Our Saviour, whose example we might safely copy, ate and drank and conversed with sinners, but in no instance did He partake of their wicked feelings and plans; so we may join with the world for the common welfare of the whole, but to associate with the idolater in his idolatry, with the licentious in his licentiousness, with the drunkard in his drunkenness, with the infidel in his infidelity, with the proud in his pride, with the gay in his gaiety, is incompatible with the honour of religion, and destructive to a life of happiness. There can be no resemblance or sympathy between the one and the other. "For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and will walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."

We may notice, first, the character of Christians; secondly the promise of God; and, thirdly, the relative connection.

I. The character of Christians: "For ye are the temple of the living God."

This is to be understood of the community of Christians, or as that community is generally called the Church, as being the place where God dwells upon earth. The idea is derived from the mode of speaking among the Jews, who are often said in the Old Testament to be the temple and habitation of God, and the allusion is probably to the fact that God dwelt by a visible symbol in the temple of old, which he claimed as His peculiar abode. As he dwelt there among the Jews, so He dwells among Christians, they are His temple—the place of His abode.

The figure is a most beautiful and impressive one. A temple is an edifice erected to the service of God. The Temple at Jerusalem may be regarded as a fit emblem of the Church.

1. In that it was a most magnificent and costly structure. The vast amount of gold, silver, and precious stones, as well as marble and cedar wood with which it was adorned, proved that no expense was spared in its erection. The gold and silver provided by David and his princes were estimated at 939,299,687*l.* sterling; the building took seven years in its erection by Solomon, during which time 183,000 men were constantly employed. The Church of Christ is a costly as well as a magnificent building; its worth cannot be calculated by millions; the wealth of creation could not purchase it. It cost a life of pain and sorrow, and a death of shame and agony to the only begotten Son of God. "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold . . . but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot." God being the architect of this temple, its magnificence cannot be equalled; its beautiful proportions are worthy of its Author, which consist in righteousness, and holiness, and love, and faith, and hope, and humility, and patience, and all the divine graces that adorn a spiritual production of God.

2. The temple was consecrated to the service of God. It was not to be a place of common resort, nor to be used for the transaction of worldly business; it was sacred, devoted exclusively to one great end. "God hath set apart them that

are godly to himself." They are a peculiar people, a holy nation, consecrated to one great object, which is the glory of Him who called them; they are sacred and inviolable, to be devoted solely to the high purpose for which they were intended.

3. The temple was a place of safety. Even among the heathen, temples are regarded inviolable, anciently those who took refuge there were safe; it was a most unpardonable crime to violate a temple, or to tear a fugitive who had taken protection there, from the altar. When Solomon was made king Adonijah his brother feared him greatly in consequence of the attempt which he had made to usurp the throne, that he might escape his anger he fled into the sanctuary and laid hold of the horns of the altar as the only means of safety. There is no salvation out of the Church: it is the only refuge appointed for condemned perishing sinners; within its walls protection is secured, neither man nor devil dares tear away the fugitive from its altar. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." No frown of justice, no curse of law, no assault of enemy can reach them there. There is safety from sin, safety from Satan, safety from death, safety from hell.

4. The temple was completed at Jerusalem of materials found and prepared in other localities. No sound of axes and hammers was heard on Mount Moriah where the temple was stationarily fixed; every beam and every stone had been already hewn, and chiseled, and marked so that it fitted exactly in its intended position. The materials were drawn from various quarters; not only the Canaan of the Israelites, but different countries of the Gentiles produced them; the labour bestowed upon their preparation was immense before they were adapted to their respective ends. The spiritual temple is prepared on earth for its stationary position in heaven. The materials are taken from various nations of Jews and Gentiles. Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, together with all the under agents are engaged in adapting them to that state of glory which they shall for ever hold in the heavenly Jerusalem.

When the Church shall have been brought there, it will have been fully polished, being a pure perfect temple, "not having spot nor wrinkle, nor any such thing."

Let us notice—

II. The promise of God in the text. "As God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them." There is a reference to some former declarations given for the encouragement of His people. Those declarations we find in Exodus, in Leviticus, and in the book of the prophet Ezekiel: "As God hath said." Paul does not quote literally, but he gives the substance of God's promise to His ancient people, the Jews, and shows that the same promise is in force in respect to Christians. There is doubtless an allusion to the fact that he would be present among both by the Shekinah, or the visible symbol of His presence, in the tabernacle and temple, and now that symbol being withdrawn, He will be present with His people by His Spirit.

This promise contains two parts, and implies first, that He will dwell in His people by His Spirit, and that He will dwell *among* them as one of themselves.

1. He will dwell in His people by His Spirit. "I will dwell in them." As He dwelt formerly in the temple by the Shekinah, so He now makes the souls of His people, or His church, the place of His peculiar residence. God is present in all places, and can as God be no more present in one place than in another; but there is a peculiarity in His presence in the Church or in the soul which distinguishes it from all other places. The idea is one which denotes agency, influence, favour, and peculiar regard. The Church is the seat of His operations, His influence is there, producing especially the effects of His agency, such as love, joy, peace, long-suffering, consolation, and strength. Assuredly in God's world there should be one spot in which He delights to dwell especially; that spot is His Zion; there, in the heart of each of the inhabitants He exercises the operations of His grace, so that that heart becomes the dwelling place of all

that is holy and good. How pure then should those persons be in whom the Holy Spirit deigns to dwell! How single should be their aim! How constant their self-denial! How heavenly should be their feelings! And how should pride, and sensuality, and vanity, and covetousness, and love of gaiety be banished from their bosoms!

2. Not only does He dwell in them by His Spirit, but He also dwells *among* them as one of themselves. "And walk in" (or among) "them." In the person of His Son He assumed their nature, and thus became bone of their bone and flesh of their flesh. He was made "in all things like unto His brethren," so that He can hold communion with them on a level with themselves. Taking upon Him their sinless infirmities He can sympathize with them; becoming the Captain of their salvation. He is in their midst to superintend their circumstances—to guide them in their course—to protect them from surrounding dangers—and to defend them from all the assaults of their enemies. As he marched forward in a pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night to guide His Israel through the wilderness, so He still walks in the midst of His people. He walks among them as a teacher among his pupils, as a master mariner on board his ship, as a general among his ranks, seeing that all is safe for their protection, improvement, and progress.

III. We have the relative connection here expressed. "And I will be their God, and they shall be my people." It is a mystical union which exists between Him and His people; whilst it is an union of supremacy on His part, it is at the same time an union of mutual friendship and familiarity.

1. He is their God, which implies not only an object of adoration and worship, but also of favour and protection. Being their God He is the source of their blessings and happiness. His perfections become their inheritance, He engages to acknowledge them for His own, He delights in them, and will supply all their need; His wisdom shall guide them, His strength shall defend them, His arm shall be

underneath them ! He will hear their prayers, and cause all things to work together for their good.

2. They shall be His people, not merely by creation and providence, but by an act of special grace. He has made a covenant in Christ to constitute them His peculiar heritage, thus conferring upon them a degree of favour to which all others are strangers. On their part they dedicate themselves to Him, loving, worshipping, and serving Him. They trust in Him, and delight in Him as their only stay and protector ; they aim in all their conversation to declare His glory and praise. The language implies a right of possession which is mutual on the part of God and His people. I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

What an inestimable privilege it is to be a Christian ! it is to be a child of God—to feel that He is our Father and our Friend, to feel that though we may be forsaken and despised by all others, yet there is One who never forsakes, One who never forgets that He has a people dependent upon Him, and who need His constant care. Compared with this how small the honour of being permitted to call the rich our friends, or to be connected with the nobles or even the princes of the world. Let the Christian then most highly prize his privileges and feel that he is raised above the most exalted elevations of rank and honour which man can bestow. All these shall fade away, the highest and the lowest shall meet on the same level in the grave, and alike turn to dust ; but the elevation of the people of God shall only begin to be visible and to be appreciated when all other honours fall into eternal decay.

The Twentieth Sunday after Trinity.

MORNING SERVICE.—Second Lesson : Luke i.

Verse 32.—“ *He shall be great.*”

No sooner had man wrecked his moral character in Eden than God graciously introduced a plan for its restoration. The blessed promise that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head, held a prospect before the new world that, relapsed and degraded as it had become through man's disobedience, it should be again raised and renovated. Thus the great Creator at once manifested that whilst he was just and true to punish the transgressor for sin, He could likewise be gracious and merciful in forgiving that sin. However, to call into exercise the faith of His people, and to show that the breach made by man in a moment would be the work of time to repair, even by God himself, He protracted the fulfilment of the promise to some distant period. Hence as the population of the world increased, and as time advanced, the knowledge of the fact was confined to the few, and its belief to fewer still. For four thousand years the world was left to the guidance of unaided reason, and while a very small portion of the human race was receiving a revelation from heaven, the mass was left to work out the problem by what means the moral character of man may be raised. In the midst of all, “darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people.” At the very time when eloquence, poetry, and philosophy were crowning men with the laurels of fame, the great bulk of the population was sinking into the most degenerate ignorance and superstition; Egypt, Assyria, Persia, Greece, Rome, successively rose to eminence and fell again in turn; but no system which either

of them introduced proved to be a sufficient lever to raise the condition of mankind until God ultimately verified the promise that the "seed of the woman" should bruise the "serpent's head."

To the fulfilment of this promise the Old Testament saints looked with delight; the patriarchs could see the day of Christ at a distance and rejoiced at the sight; the priests recognised an emblem of His worth in their dying victims; the prophets hailed His coming with ecstasies of joy; pious women dreaded the barren womb as the disgrace of their sex, each hoping to be honoured with giving birth to the Saviour of the world. But this honour was reserved for Mary, a poor virgin of the tribe of Judah, who found favour in the sight of God, and received the glad tidings that of her the promised seed should be born. "And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary; for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name *JESUS*. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David. And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end."

In the text we have an intimation from the angel Gabriel of the future greatness of the Lord Jesus Christ, which may be regarded in connection with Himself, and in connection with His Church. Both views being inseparably blended together, we shall now notice them under one head, and observe—

1. That He is great in His pedigree. "Who shall declare his generation?"

We meet with the biography of many eminent and praiseworthy characters in the annals of sacred and profane history, in the tracing of whose genealogy we have been both interested and benefited, but the pedigree of none surprise us so much as that of the Son of Mary. "Who shall declare His generation?" We have indeed His lineage on His mother's side in the first chapter of St. Matthew, as far back as

Abraham, and in the third chapter of this book we have His lineage on His supposed father's side traced to Adam ; but if we regard the testimony of the angel to Mary as being valid, we must look to some other source for the pedigree of Christ than the lineage of Joseph the carpenter. And the angel answered and said unto her, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee ; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God." He "shall be called the Son of God." God has elsewhere said of Him, "This is my beloved Son ; hear ye Him." "He was declared to be the Son of God, with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." Some speak of the eternal sonship of the Lord Jesus Christ, stating that He must of necessity be the eternal Son of God, or if we deny this, we must either deny the union of the Godhead, or the distinction of persons in the blessed Trinity. But this doctrine seems to be involved in a great mystery, for if we speak of the eternal sonship of Christ *as God*, we must, of course, speak of Him as inferior to the Father, inasmuch as the Son must be younger than the Father. We are instructed in scripture that He is co-equal, and co-existent with the Father. "Being in the form of God, he thought it not robbery to be equal with God." If He be equal with God, He must Himself be God ; if he be God He must be eternal, if He be eternal, none could have been His senior. We cannot therefore consistently speak of eternal sonship. However, by escaping Scylla we must not strike against Charybdis. Three persons and one God is a mystery that belongs to Omniscience alone to demonstrate, but as we are assured that there are three distinct persons going under the names of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, we must understand those distinctions of persons as filling different capacities in their official engagements to effect the salvation of a perishing world. Christ is then the Son of God in office, being appointed the only Mediator between God and man. The more we reflect on His pedigree, the stronger we feel the

force of the question, "Who shall declare His generation?" but we may conclude with the angel, "He shall be great."

2. His greatness may be regarded in the circumstances of His birth. His nativity indeed excited but little interest among the aristocracy of the land. Herod the King lived sumptuously in his palace, and had no intimation of the advent of the Messiah, neither in dream nor in vision. Cæsar the Emperor, ambitious to secure his authority, demanded that each subject of Judea should attend his own city to be enrolled for taxation, little thinking that thereby he was fulfilling a most important prophecy of scripture. "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me, that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." When the different parties met, none were more unnoticed than Joseph the carpenter, and though the condition of Mary called for the kindest attention, even the brute was not less regarded than was she. To accommodate a higher order of men and women, she was compelled to resort to a disconsolate stable, and in a most critical crisis was deserted even by her own sex; but notwithstanding the degradation with which they met on earth, heaven was all in motion. The messenger of light was sent to announce His advent, a choir of angels came down to celebrate His birth, and doubtless the whole attention of the heavenly hosts was then directed to the spot. Nature also was not dead to the juncture, but seemed to make obeisance and to acknowledge the presence of her Lord; a distinguished star appeared as an omen to the *magi* that one had visited earth who would introduce a discovery which had hitherto baffled the wisest of the East; and thus it led them to the spot where the Prince of glory laid. *All* heaven and earth (man excepted) at once acknowledged that He was the wonder of the world, and so corroborated the testimony of the angel, "He shall be great."

3. His greatness appeared in His power to perform miracles. There were no miracles like unto His. All others

were wrought in His name, and by His authority, but His were performed in His own name, and on His own responsibility. Need we ask what they were? He made the blind to see, the deaf to hear, the dumb to speak, the lame to walk, the dead to live. He healed all manner of sickness and disease among the people. The food was augmented with His blessing, the waves were submissive to His command, the storm obeyed His nod, even evil spirits were made to bow to His word. Every motion of His life, every step of His career, every act of His hand, and every word of His mouth unanimously confirmed the angel's declaration, "He shall be great."

4. We see His greatness in the wonders of His death. It was truly a most degraded and shameful death—the "death of the cross." Who can but regard the Jews with indignant pity when thinking of their conduct towards the King of glory? Oh! mark His anxiety—see His sweat—behold His pains—hear His groans; what pangs of agony must have pierced His heart when He faced all the outrages of men and devils, pressed with a burden of a world's sin, together with the edge of justice's flaming sword. View Him ascend the mount in the hand of Divine justice, the law bringing forward its demands—the fate of His weeping Church following in His train—the heavens looking down on the transactions of the day—and the victim expiring with the comprehensive sentence "It is finished." At this moment nature was convulsed in sympathy with its Governor. The sun shaded himself under a gloomy veil, darkness covered the earth, the rocks rent, the graves opened, the veil of the Temple was torn "from the top to the bottom," and all unitedly exclaiming, "He shall be great."

5. Look again upon Him in the triumph of His resurrection. He was safely laid in the sepulchre bound up in His grave-clothes, a large stone was rolled to the entrance of the tomb, sealed with the governor's signet to secure the safety of His imprisonment; the Roman guard carefully watched the spot, and not a doubt existed but that all His pretensions to Divinity

were baffled and confounded ; but before the revolutions of three days His enemies had to feel the force of His victory. An angel descended from heaven, his appearance struck the guard with terror, they trembled, "and became as dead men," the stone was unsealed and rolled away, the garments of the tomb were cast aside, all the bars were dislodged, the Conqueror rose exclaiming, "I am he that liveth, and was dead ; and, behold, I live for evermore." His enemies were totally vanquished, and were compelled to believe the fact, "He shall be great."

6. The majesty of His ascension testifies His greatness. At the expiration of forty days after His resurrection He led His disciples to the Mount of Olives to take their final adieu upon earth of their beloved Master. Having pronounced on them His blessing, He was conveyed to His kingdom in a chariot of clouds, when the command was given, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates ; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors ; and the King of Glory shall come in." Soon was He saluted with the "welcome home." Every heart anxious to place Him upon His throne, every voice ready to celebrate His praise, every hand prepared to put the laurel on His head, and every region of glory re-echoing with exclamations, "He shall be great."

7. He shall be great in the extent of His kingdom. Hence the declaration of the angel, "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest : and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David. And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever ; and of his kingdom there shall be no end." This was promised by the Father before He assumed our nature. "And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel. I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation to the ends of the earth." The "house of Jacob" shall include under His rule not only the race anciently called after his name, but also a portion of the various nations of the world. The promise stands sure. He is to be raised in the

preaching of the Gospel to the notice and esteem of all the nations of the earth. His Church shall be the only Catholic Church, His kingdom shall be extended "from shore to shore, and from the river to the uttermost parts of the earth." India and Ethiopia shall stretch forth their hands unto Him. Those sitting upon thrones of power shall become fathers in Israel and their queens become matrons in the Church. "They shall come from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven." The "Star of Bethlehem" shall beckon onward the denizens of all climes. The "cross of Calvary" shall be the standard around which every nation shall rally. The great multitude that shall stand before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands, will be composed "of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues." Unto the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess that "He shall be great."

Finally, His greatness shall most visibly appear when He shall come the second time to judgment. Then every eye shall see Him, and even "those who pierced him ; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." When He comes on the throne of His majesty with thousands of saints and His holy angels, His enemies will be compelled to shrink from the splendour of His glory, whilst His friends will hail Him with acclamations of joy and shouts of praise. To the one He will be the object of terror, to the other he will be the perfection of admiration ; on the one He will pronounce the sentence of everlasting condemnation, on the other He will announce the benediction of never-ending bliss. The supreme authority which He will then possess must command the attention of heaven, earth, and hell, whilst there can be no dissentient voice in acknowledging that "He shall be great."

In conclusion, by reflecting on the greatness of Christ, how we should admire His condescension in stooping to notice us, especially in assuming our nature, and dying the just for the unjust, that we might be brought unto God. Here we

should guard against low apprehensions of Him; He is esteemed great by the Father, and by the holy angels, and shall we think lightly of Him? How anxious we should also be to procure His favour, that when He shall appear in His greatest glory we "shall be like him, and see him as he is."

The Twentieth Sunday after Trinity.

EVENING SERVICE.—First Lesson : Micah vi.

Verse 6—8.—“ *Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?*”

God had at this time a controversy with His people; they had sinned, and He was offended. He commands the prophet Micah to proclaim the quarrel in a voice that should be echoed by the hills, the mountains, and the foundations of the earth. The inquiry is made, on what ground could they support the quarrel on their part. What had God done to give them any cause for offence? What heavy burthens had He placed upon them? What oppressive measures had He exercised towards them? In what had He at any time wearied them? He calls upon them to testify against Him if they had any complaints to make. They were not able to reply to the challenge; but were silent. Then He proceeds to show that instead of having been their oppressor He had been their constant benefactor. In a few concise sentences He reminds them of the great goodness which He had manifested towards them from the time they were brought up out of the land of Egypt until they safely arrived at Gilgal. So forcible were the arguments employed that the people are represented as beginning to relent, and to inquire by what means God's

anger might be appeased, and how they might be reinstated in His favour. "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" This is bidding high; far too high to be real. Such extravagant proposals sound very much like the language of irony. Some of the things mentioned were utterly impossible, and others were extremely sinful, as if they would intimate that God's requirements were so great as to render compliance impossible. In fact, they mention every thing but the right thing; they express a willingness to give the most costly presents, but in no instance do they offer their hearts. This offering after all was the only one which He required, He was willing to dispense with the burnt offerings, and the calves, and the rams, and the rivers of oil, and the firstborn; but he required from them the consecration of the heart unto Him. "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" In the text we have brought before us the provisions of two laws, which are those of the ceremonial, and those of the moral; the great difference between the two laws is this, the one was commanded conditionally, and the other is commanded necessarily; the one was, therefore, necessary because it was commanded, the other is commanded because it is necessary. It is not now within our province to inquire why God commanded the offering of so many sacrifices in the observance of the ceremonial law; but of this we are assured, that no sacrifice was of any benefit, only as far as it had a reference to that one great sacrifice of which it was an emblem; but for the commands of the moral law we can at once see the reason, because they constitute the relation which exists between man and his God, and between man and his fellow-man.

There are two things here suggested which we shall briefly

notice: first, that the most costly ceremonial sacrifices which man can offer are inefficient to atone for sin; secondly, that the dedication of ourselves in accordance with God's prescription renders us acceptable to Him.

I. The most costly ceremonial sacrifices which man can offer are inefficient to atone for sin.

Man, under the conviction of sin, and the feeling of the necessity of some atonement, naturally turns to the execution of some great deeds of virtue, attaching the idea of merit to his performances. Even the most devoted Christian somehow or the other feels it difficult to divest himself of the notion of meritorious actions. To feel that an act is good without being meritoriously good requires great spiritual discipline, and exclusive Divine teaching. The people addressed by the prophet Micah being convinced that God was justly offended at their transgressions, wished to offer an atonement, and inquired what they could do to appease His displeasure. They felt no sacrifice too great to make, no expense too considerable to incur; the best of their flocks, the richest of their produce, even the dearest of their kindred, should not be withheld to effect reconciliation. "*Wherewith* shall I come before the Lord?" Taking the text as it stands, expressive of the real sentiments of the speaker, there is a vast amount of anxious feeling to be observed, "*Wherewith* shall I come?" I feel that I am a sinner, and that I am lost. I have forfeited every claim to the favour of God, and he is justly displeased; how can I be restored into His favour? Similar was the language of the trembling jailor of Philippi, and is the language of every sinner when he is first awakened to see his real spiritual condition. Again, a devotional posture of body is proposed, "and *bow* myself before the most high God." Such a posture of humble prostration is both seemly and commendable in a poor mortal worm as man is when approaching his Creator and Judge. It is an acknowledgment of the great disparity which exists between the petitioner and the Being petitioned, and should be adopted whenever the throne of Divine majesty

is addressed. Then a series of self-denying sacrifices are enumerated, "Shall I come before him with burnt offerings?" They were commanded under that dispensation: "calves of a year old," were acceptable typical sacrifices; "rams" were required to be offered on the altar, but *thousands* were superfluous even under that economy. "Oil" was commanded in the meat offering, but *ten thousands of rivers of oil* was more than nature could supply; the "firstborn" was to be dedicated unto God, but not to be sacrificed for the parent's transgression, much less reasonable was it that the whole of his offspring, the fruit of his body, should be sacrificed for the sin of his soul. Taking the whole of the language, as we have said, to be the sincere expressions of an overflowing heart, it indicates an intense anxiety to please God, and a willingness to part with all to purchase His favour. But provided the expressions were sincere, and provided it were within the possibility of man to offer such sacrifices, still they would be inadequate to meet the requirements of the case. They could not atone for sin. There are two reasons for this.

1. The *nature* of the sacrifices mentioned could not meet the requirements of the Divine law. Man had sinned, and man must suffer. If all the calves, and rams, and oil of creation were combined they could not constitute human nature; hence they could not be accepted as a substitute, and though the firstborn and the fruit of the body partook of the sinner's nature, yet, they were sinners themselves, and, therefore, could not atone even for a parent's sin. "None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him."

Applying this to ourselves, nothing that we can do is sufficient to atone for one sin. The most pure act of morality, the most brilliant instance of charity, the most humiliating form of devotion, the most enduring infliction of penance cannot weigh a single grain in the scale of atonement. The religions of the world impose such on their devotees, with the view of purchasing heaven and happiness; but the Hindoo may lacerate his body, the Mahomedan may make long

pilgrimages, the Papist may undergo painful penances, but all will be in vain to atone for sin ; they cannot approach the perfection of God's law, consequently they must be inadequate. Nothing which man can do will meet the demands ; to give a ransom, either for himself or others, is therefore hopeless.

2. Such sacrifices were not intended to atone for sin. Before man had transgressed, God had fixed upon the atonement ; it was one of His own appointment, and the only one that could answer the end. He instituted the sacrifices of animals as typical of that sacrifice which was to be offered once for all. Each sacrifice as its blood dropped upon the altar declared, "without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin," and expiring under the hand of the worshipper it directed the mind of the worshipper to the Lamb of God that was to take away the sin of the world. In that Lamb was found all that was necessary to constitute an atoning sacrifice, for possessing the nature of the sinner without partaking of his sin He could suffer the extreme penalty due to others ; and possessing the nature of God He was able to support Himself under, and to impress infinite virtue upon that suffering. He therefore having suffered, the Just for the unjust, we are brought unto God. He being made sin for us who knew no sin, we may be made the righteousness of God in Him. Thank God we require no other atoning sacrifice, the one offered is sufficient. One stream of the blood of Christ is infinitely more valuable than ten thousands of rivers of oil,

We observe—

II. That the dedication of ourselves in accordance with God's prescription will render us acceptable to Him.

He tells us plainly what He demands, and insists upon its fulfilment by those who would please Him. "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good ; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God ?" Let their money perish with them who think that the pardon of sin, and the favour of

God can be so purchased. No; God has "showed thee, O man, what is good." Here we are told—

1. That God has made a discovery of His mind and will unto us for the rectifying of our mistakes, and for the guidance of our practice. We need not trouble ourselves to make proposals, the terms are already settled and laid down. He, whom we have offended, and to whom we are accountable, has told us upon what conditions He will be reconciled to us. The lesson is taught not to the Jew in particular, but to man in general. "He hath showed thee, *O man*"—every man—the Gentile man as well as the Jew. It is no ceremonial command but a moral precept applicable to every rational creature in God's creation. It is a lesson containing the discovery of that which is good, and which the Lord requires of us. It contains the end at which we should aim, and the means by which we are to obtain it. It is all good. There is an innate goodness in moral duties consonant to the eternal rule and reason of good and evil which are unalterable. Conformity to this rule has a tendency to our universal good, being not only the condition of our future happiness, but also the great expedient of our present peace. In the keeping of God's "commandments there is great reward."

2. We have here the substance of this discovery. The good which God requires of us is not the paying of a price for the pardon of sin, but doing the duty which is the condition of our interest in the pardon already purchased. The duty comprises the whole of the commands delivered on Mount Sinai, and written on the two tables of stone. The second table is here placed first. "To do justly and to love mercy." To do justly is to render unto all their due; to "owe no one anything, except to love one another." God abominates dishonesty whether it consists in little or in much. Before we can claim God's favour we must pay our debts; we must wrong no one in body, goods, nor name, but do that which is right and just to all. Not only are we to do justly, but we are "to love mercy." It is not sufficient to be *just* to all, but we must be *kind* to all. As far as lies within our power

to relieve the distress of all, to help all in time of need, "bearing each other's burden, and so fulfil the law of Christ." Nor must we only *shew* mercy but *love* mercy, love it as God does, delight in it as Christ did when upon earth, going about doing good, seeking objects of mercy. Justice, you perceive, is placed before mercy. We must not give that in alms which has been wrongfully acquired, nor that with which our debts ought to be paid. God will not accept robbery for a burnt offering.

The next part of our acceptable duty includes all the commands of the first table, "and to walk humbly with thy God." This duty includes that we enter into a solemn covenant to take the Lord for our God, that we attend to His word, that we make it our constant business to please Him, that we conform ourselves to His will, that we keep up our communion with Him, and that we study to approve ourselves to Him in all our conversation. This is to be done *humbly*, submitting our understanding to His truth, submitting our conscience to the convictions of His Spirit, submitting our will to His providence, having nothing of our own, but resigning all to Him. Every thought of ours must be brought down and laid submissively at his feet.

This is what God requires of us, without which the most costly observances are vain oblations. This is more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.

The Twenty-first Sunday after Trinity.

MORNING SERVICE.—First Lesson: Habak. ii.

Verse 8.—“*Though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.*”

THE book of Habakkuk is remarkable for its highly poetical style; taking into consideration its combined sublimity, simplicity, and piety, it is equal to any other captivating portion of Holy Scripture. Who this prophet was, or when and where he lived, we are not informed. He is thought to have been contemporary with Jeremiah and Ezekiel, therefore, lived at the time of the final destruction of Jerusalem by the army of Nebuchadnezzar. The principal predictions contained in his book are the destruction of Jerusalem and the captivity of the Jews by the Chaldeans; their deliverance from the oppressor at the appointed time; and the total ruin of the Babylonian Empire. The promise of the Messiah is confirmed; the overruling providence of God is asserted; and the most perfect confidence in the fulfilment of His promises expressed. In this chapter he compares himself unto a watchman standing upon a tower surveying the surrounding country, watching the movement of circumstances, and waiting in anxious expectation for the accomplishment of some long-wished-for event. He is commanded to wait on, and to write in legible characters the signs of the times. The period which he looked for was fixed, but years must roll by, changes must follow each other in rapid succession, the days of a nation must be numbered before it should arrive. “For the vision is yet for an appointed time.” The Chaldeans are not yet to be stripped of their dominion, and Israel delivered out of their hand, “but at the end it shall speak, and not lie.” Those people shall be allowed to *punish* Israel, but not to

destroy them, and at the end of the appointed time, they shall themselves be ruined, and Israel shall escape. "Though (the event) tarry, wait for it." Exercise confidence in my declaration, my time may not be thy time, but be patient and watchful, "because it will surely come, and not tarry."

The text has a practical application, and teaches us to exercise patient confidence in the promises of God, even when the appearance of things may be discouraging. We have then before us a duty prescribed, and also an encouragement expressed.

I. We have a duty prescribed. "Though it tarry, wait for it."

In the application of the duty to ourselves we may observe, that a patient waiting upon God is one of the brightest gems in the Christian character; it expresses a lively interest in what God has promised, and a confident assurance of the truth of those promises. To be impatient is to doubt, and to doubt is a reflection on the veracity of God's character. Patience is a fixed determination of the regenerate soul to wait upon God: it is a surrendering of ourselves in all our interests to God, to be disposed of by Him according to His own will and pleasure. It is a heaven-born principle, infused into the soul by the Holy Ghost, which nothing else can supply—which neither the disposition of nature, nor the discipline of training can foster. There is, indeed, an imitation of it in the morbid indifference which is sometimes manifested in the existence and consequences of evil; but that arises from the insensibility of a thoughtless mind, and not from a steadfast resignation under the perception of a Divine dispensation. The patient man, on the contrary, is sensible of the difficulties of his position, and is still meek and resigned.

Patience is absolute to the Christian character. You may as well imagine a man without a soul, as a Christian without patience. He may not be blessed with very bright parts; he

may not possess a talent for singing, nor for expressing himself publicly either to God or to man ; he may not possess full assurance of faith, nor confidence of hope, nor the joy of salvation ; but without patience he cannot be a sincere, consistent Christian. A Christian is a person in whom Christ is formed : to know what he ought to be, you must consider what Christ was when He came to place before us a rule of conduct. Amongst other virtues, He was " meek and lowly of heart." Look at Him living, look at Him dying ; all the circumstances which surrounded Him tended to inflame irascibility and excite revenge, but instead of hastily resigning His mission, out of disgust with the persons to whom it was directed, He patiently persevered ; and instead of exercising the power of revenge which He possessed, He prayed for His enemies in the utmost extremity. " Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

There are three things which require the full exercise of Christian patience.

1. Delay in the bestowment of promised blessings. God has promised to His people great and precious blessings which are intended for their support and consolation in life. They consist in deliverance from annoying circumstances, and in the enjoyment of liberty, peace, and happiness. His unerring wisdom does not see fit that we should at all times realize those blessings according to our desire ; there is a delay that calls forth the energy of faith and endurance. We must wait, and hope, and exercise confidence in His faithfulness. The seed does not grow in an hour, the pearl does not form in a day, perfection is not produced at once. " Though it tarry, wait for it." The apostle James illustrates this grace by a beautiful simile, " Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord ; behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient, stablish your hearts ; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh." The husbandman has an assurance of a productive harvest to reward him for the labour of the year, but he sows

his seed in the midst of great discouragements, the frost of winter and the drought of summer threaten the destruction of his crop and the annihilation of his hope, still he "sows in hope," and endures the whole in patience. There is an instructive lesson to be learnt from the example of Abraham. A progeny more numerous than the stars of heaven was promised to him when he left his country and his friends to sojourn in a country of which he knew nothing. Years passed by, and the promise was unfulfilled; he and his wife had become "as good as dead" through age, and so far from a numerous posterity, not even a child had blessed their union. Still by patience he was strengthened to wait in faith and prayer upon God, and when the first part of the promise had been accomplished and Isaac had been born, most mysterious! he was commanded to offer up in sacrifice that son of promise with his own hand. Still he staggers not—still he waits upon God—he obeys the mysterious mandate, hoping against hope, encouraged to expect countless generations to be born from the womb of death. Another instance of extraordinary patience we see in the case of Elijah. God promised that the rain should descend and drop fatness upon the earth, but where were the clouds? Six times did he send his servant to inspect, and six times could he see no indication of the coming blessing, still the prophet waited upon God. At last a cloud appears not larger than a man's hand. It is enough, his patience is rewarded. The cloud of witnesses who through faith and patience trusted in God stand forth to beckon us forward in the exercise of the same precious grace. "For ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise." "Though it tarry, wait for it."

2. Afflictive dispensations of Providence call forth the exercise of patience. God has ever, and will ever discipline His children to patience. Through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of heaven. It was the road over which the ancients travelled, and modern Christians cannot expect to be exempt. Surely they could not wish to

choose any other, since their glorious Redeemer travelled it before them. It is a consecrated road, marked with the footsteps of patriarchs, and prophets, and apostles, and kings, and martyrs, and confessors, and all of whom the world was not worthy. On this road the footsteps of Jesus may be traced in marks of blood, He being "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." Long-suffering patience does not count the burden heavy nor the yoke uneasy in company with so great a sufferer. In his absence indeed it might have been intolerable, but in His presence it is easy to suffer long. His society beguiles the way, the sweetness of His converse softens down the bitterness of the cold north and east winds, so that the shorn lamb shall not endure more than is necessary. Yes, the child of God reckons the tribulations which have exercised his patience amongst his richest gains, for "tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost; which is given unto us." Have you ever noticed the rays of the sun reflecting upon the spray of a cataract? The majestic grandeur of the cataract itself must have struck you with awe, but the attractive beauty of those little gems flying about in the sunshine, as it were in derisive gladness over the abyss, must have so excited your admiration that you forgot for a time even the roar of the tremendous waterfall, and the mind became tranquillised in that solemn spot. Such cataracts often occur in the passage of life; you are awed and sometimes depressed by the commotion, but the promises of Christ reflected by the sunshine of His presence display a tranquillising power, so that for a while at least you forget the sorrows and vexations of this troublesome world, and you patiently rest under the strokes of a chastening hand. "Light afflictions, which are but for a moment," are welcome visitors, whilst patience helps us to feel that they "work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

It is somewhat a singular coincidence that our Saxon word *dumb* seems to have been derived from a Hebrew word of the

same sound which signifies patience. Such is the influence produced by a patient endurance of afflictive dispensations. You may not always have the fortitude to join with Eli when he said, "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good," or with Job when he said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord;" but patience will aid you to join with Aaron in *holding your peace*, or to say with David, "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it." You may wish the cloud to pass—the calamity to cease, but the time is not yet come. "Though it tarry, wait for it."

8. The censorious and annoying conduct of others require the exercise of patience. How carefully did our blessed Master adapt Himself to the weakness of others! He frankly forgave the infirmities and unbelief of His wavering disciples, and even apologised for them when they could not watch with Him *one hour*. The unjust charges brought against Him by His enemies were not resented. Instead of rendering evil for evil, He did good to them that evilly entreated Him, for cruel curses He returned innumerable blessings. How beautifully He carried out in His example the principle afterwards laid down by St. Paul, "Avenge not yourselves, but rather give place to wrath," teaching us to overcome evil with good—to pray for them who spitefully use us. There is much to bear in our transactions with the world. The waywardness of some, the dishonesty of others, the indifference of others, the false accusations of others, and the ignorance and infirmities of all, are trials which few escape at some period of their journey through life. To bear the unjust suspicions, not only of enemies, but of friends—to have your conduct misunderstood, and your motives misconstrued—to meet with chilling reserve, when you expected heartwarming confidence—to see prejudice and mistake placing up barriers to intercourse—are trials hard to endure. Never does the grace of patience achieve a nobler triumph in the soul than when it wins the victory in the hour of these temptations. Job, whose patience bore the loss of all his property, the bereavement of

all his children, and the wreck of his whole constitution without a murmur, was tempted to complain at the unjust accusations of his friends. David, the man after God's own heart, could have borne the reproaches of an enemy, but he bitterly complained when his own familiar friend, in whom he trusted, who had eaten of his bread, lifted up his heel against him. With many of such enemies to meekness and peace has patience to contend. Happy the man who can prayerfully commit his case to Him that judgeth righteously. He can then display a fruit of the Spirit on earth which angels behold with wonder and delight in heaven.

II. We have in the text an encouragement expressed: "Because it will surely come, and not tarry." Literally, this was to strengthen the heart of the prophet in prospect of the long captivity which the Jews had to endure in Babylon; long as it was, it should have an end, and deliverance should certainly be effected at the time appointed by Divine wisdom. It should not tarry a day nor an hour beyond the fixed period. This may be applied to the fulfilment of all God's promises, and to the deliverance of His people from all the distressing circumstances of the world. "Sorrow (may) endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." Patient endurance is required for a season, but there is a bright lining to the cloud, and opening sunshine is not far off.

The assurance of the fulfilment of Divine promises is established.

1. On the truthfulness and faithfulness of God. "Hath He said, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?" "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; for he is faithful that promised." God is incapable of falsehood; if you believe the scriptures to be spoken by Him, you must believe that every promise which they contain is founded on truth. The fulfilment of the promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob respecting their seed is an example of such faithfulness. Notwithstanding the reverses of those people, and the apparent delay in the

accomplishment of some of the promises given them, still they were all verified, though perhaps not in the exact manner which they had expected. For instance, their deliverance from Egypt and settlement in the land of Canaan ; their more recent deliverance from Babylon, and their return to Jerusalem ; and the procession of the Messiah from a certain family of a certain tribe of that people were respectively promised and realised in the proper time. "God is not slack concerning his promise as some men count slackness." If He has engaged to protect, to comfort, to strengthen, and to deliver His people, there is no room for doubt, and we have no right to doubt, "because it will surely come, and not tarry."

2. The wisdom and power of God are a guarantee of the fulfilment of His promises. Men may be true and faithful as far as their knowledge and strength extend ; but man at the best is fallible, he cannot foresee the difficulties in the way of performances, and when they arise he has not the power to resist them. He who "declareth the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done," could foresee every obstacle and could provide for them ; "He who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with a span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance," is able to remove every obstacle from the way of the accomplishment of all His designs and the fulfilment of all His promises. Then let not the children of Zion despair, let no suspicion arise, but let there be a patient abiding of the soul upon God, awaiting the fulfilment of that gracious word of promise which has been sealed by the blood of the faithful and true witness.

Therefore, beloved brethren, strengthen your hearts in God. Seek and exercise this blessed grace. Let me bring to your remembrance that "the night is far spent, the day is at hand." The time of your redemption draweth near. It will not be long before He who comes will come and not tarry. Gird up the loins of your minds, endure unto the end, faint

not ; in heaven the saints suffer no longer, there will be no need of patience there. You shall soon be with Christ, who will wipe all tears from your faces, and give you rest. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation ; for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him."

The Twenty-first Sunday after Trinity.

EVENING SERVICE.—Second Lesson : Ephesians i.

Verses 22, 23.—“ *And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.*”

THE contents of this epistle are extremely important, as they exhibit at once the whole substance of Gospel doctrines, and the various duties of the followers of Christ. The plan of Divine wisdom is here unveiled in respect to the constitution, the union, the extent, and the blessedness of the Church, composed of both Jews and Gentiles, perhaps more fully than in any other separate part of the sacred oracles. The love of God in predestinating, calling, and glorifying His people is here depicted in the most glowing terms ; the work of the Spirit, enlightening, quickening, and sanctifying the saints, is painted in the brightest colours ; the union of Christ with His Church, together with His authority over the Church, are exhibited in their fairest proportions ; and the duty of Christians towards Father, Son, and Holy Ghost is described in the most forcible manner. The similes employed are striking and instructive, the inferences drawn are practical and useful, and the applications made are convincing and experimental. The epistle contains a whole body of divinity worthy of the study of the profoundest divine, and still simple enough to meet the comprehension of the weakest intellect. The commendation given to the whole Bible may be justly applied to this portion, “ It contains depths in which elephants can wade, and shallows which lambs can ford.”

Christ and His Church are represented as being perfectly adapted to each other. The former having chosen the latter, He has become to her all that she can desire, and has engaged

to furnish her with all that she can need. He has been given "to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."

Let us enquire, first, What is meant by the Church? secondly, the relative union which exists between Christ and the Church; and thirdly, the dignity conferred upon the Church by virtue of the union.

I. What is meant by the Church? There is much read and much said of the Church of God and the Church of Christ, but we may not all be perfectly clear in our notions respecting the real constitution of the Church.

To explain this we may remark,—

1. Negatively, that the Church does not consist in a building compiled of physical materials such as stones, and bricks, and mortar, and timber. There may be a Church without any of those things. There was a Church in Eden, there was a Church in the ark of Noah, there was a Church on the plains of Mamre, there was a Church at Bethel, there was a Church in Egypt, there was a Church in the wilderness, there was a Church in Jerusalem before the Temple was built, there was a Church in Babylon after the Temple was destroyed, there was a Church on Mount Tabor, and on Mount Olives, and on Mount Calvary, there was a Church in the "upper-room," there was a Church going from house to house in the time of the apostles, and there is still a Church wherever two or three are met together in the name of Christ. It matters not whether it be on the mountain top, or in the desert, in a closet, or in a field; the Church exists independently of the building. Neither does a class of men invested with official authority compose the Church; the bishops and the clergy are merely officers constituted for the good order and right discipline of the Church; as to themselves, whatever be their grades, they form but a fractional part of the Church. Nor does the Church consist of any denominational section formed by men. There are many of these, such as the Greek Church, the Roman Church, the English Church, &c., with all their

divisions occasioned by the weakness of man's judgment. Our prejudices bias us in favour of the one or the other, and we think that ours is the only true Church to the exclusion of all others. We are impressed that we are right and all others must be wrong; but the fact is we are all right and we are all wrong; we are all right so far as we rest upon Christ as the only foundation of our hopes, and we are all wrong so far as we substitute any thing else for Christ; therefore, whatever section you may think proper to join (and you are very much influenced by circumstances), never imagine that yours is *the* Church. If you and I shall be honoured with the inestimable privilege of entering heaven we may expect to meet there some from among the various sections of Christians by whatever name they may be distinguished upon earth. Thousands from the Greek Church, and the Roman Church, and the Protestant Church; whether they be Episcopalians, or Presbyterians, or Methodists, or Baptists, or Independents, will surround the throne of God, and join without a discord in that never-ending anthem, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever, Amen." The reason of our discord upon earth is our ignorance of each other's real character; if we knew each other better, there would exist a greater union in serving our common Master. Then—

2. We may observe positively that the Church of Christ is a number of people who renounce the sin and wickedness of the world, and believe in Christ, resting their souls solely upon Him for salvation. It may be remarked for the information of those who have not had the opportunity of knowing that the original Greek word for church means *being called from*, signifying that those who compose it have been called from among the wicked world, and have been consecrated to the service of the Lord Jesus Christ. This calling consists of two parts, the one being formal, the other effectual; by the former we are made members of Christ's visible Church, by the latter we are made members of His invisible or mystical

Church. The one is the membership of water baptism, the other is the membership of the Spirit. Our Saviour speaking of the new birth in His conversation with Nicodemus, said, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." To be born of water is to be made a member of the visible Church by the sacrament of baptism, and this I understand to be the meaning of the word *regenerate* in our Prayer-book, so that all who are thus baptized are members incorporate of the outward or visible Church of Christ, but "all are not Israel who are of Israel." The kingdom of God cometh not by observation; it is "within you." There must be also a birth of the Spirit, an effectual inward calling, changing the heart, and transforming the mind to make it obedient to all the laws of Christ, to constitute true membership of the real invisible Church.

Again, the Church consists of two divisions, separated from each other by the partition of death. The one portion is upon earth, the other is in heaven. The earthly portion is preparatory for the heavenly, there is no entering the one without passing through the other. The Church in heaven is perfect, not having "spot nor wrinkle nor any such thing;" the Church on earth is imperfect, but if you would join the heavenly, you must first join the earthly.

We observe—

II. The relative union which exists between Christ and His Church. "And gave him to be the head over all things to the church which is his body." Christ is the Head, the Church is the body, which infers a union.

1. Of nature. To see a head of one nature and the body of another would be monstrous. To support the consistency of the metaphor He condescended to assume the nature of man, of which the body should be composed. He took upon Him the seed of Abraham, "it behoveth Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God." "For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of

one; for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren." By joining the Church to Himself He became an honourable part of the body.

2. There is a union of influence. The head plans and contrives for the support, the protection, and the whole welfare of the body; and also guides and conducts it onward in its course. Without the head the body would be a dead mass of inactive members, unconscious in itself, and useless to others. Christ, as the Head, communicates all necessary influence as from Himself to His members; not only the influence of common gifts, but also of spiritual life and motion. He plans, He guides, He protects—without Him the Church would be as useless as a natural corpse without a head. The peculiarity of His headship over the Church is forcibly expressed in the text. He is the Head over *all things*. Having all power and dominion in His hand, He is placed above all in heaven, earth, and hell; principality and power, might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but in the world to come, are under His control. The power which He exercises over those is the power of a supreme King and Judge. They are put "under His feet," so that none can act nor move except by His authority and permission; and observe the expression, "and gave him to be the head over all things *to the Church*, which is His body." They are under *His* command to be subservient to *her* interest and progress. Things in heaven are to be enlisted into her service. The angels are Christ's honourable subjects—the nobles in His kingdom; but the Church is His dear spouse that lies in His bosom, so they are intended for her service. As the nobles in a prince's court regard it a preferment and honour to wait upon his queen, so the glorious angels account it no dishonour to them to serve the saints. St. Paul tells us they are "all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation." It is an office for which they are appointed, and in which they delight. Not only are the angels serviceable to the Church, but also all other things shall tend to further her

welfare. All the circumstances of Providence, and all the elements of nature shall be made to co-operate for the same end. Summer and winter, cold and heat, fire and water, wind and vapour, shall not withhold their aid to promote the present advancement and future happiness of that body which is so closely connected to the Head.

3. There is a union of sympathy. The head feels with the body; if even the most insignificant and remotest member suffer, the head is affected. There is a system of nerves running throughout the whole of the body which excites a chord of sympathy between the several members, but more especially between the body and the head. There is also a system of principles running throughout the whole Church which connect every portion of it together, convey a throb of fellow-feeling in the case of pain, or of happiness, and this feeling is conveyed especially to Christ the Head. There is another view in which the case may be taken; the *head* means the chief of anything; the chief of man is the mind, and we all know how the mind sympathizes with the body. Pain in any part of the body is immediately reciprocated by the mind, so that it becomes dejected and sorrowful from the effect produced by the suffering. Christ is the Mind or the Chief of the Church, who enters fully into the sufferings of all its members. "We have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities." Yes, He is touched as the head and the mind are touched with the sufferings of the body. Our Lord, now in heaven, exercises a tender and compassionate spirit towards His suffering children upon earth. He has an experimental knowledge of what His people suffer either from God or from man, for He has suffered all Himself, and He is interested in them, He is concerned for them, He is related to them, as being one of them.

We observe—

III. The high dignity conferred upon the Church by virtue of the union between it and Christ its Head. It is made "the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." Yet, the

Church is not the fulness of Christ personally, but of Christ mystically,—not the fulness of His natural, but of His mystical body. In this latter respect every saint, and every degree of grace in a saint is part of the fulness of Christ. The fulness of everything constitutes its excellency. The fulness of corn in the ear, the fulness of fruit on the tree, the fulness of precious substance in the pearl, is the excellency of the ear, the tree, and the pearl. So the Divine, the incomprehensible fulness of Christ constitutes His excellency above all others. “It pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell.” Fulness of wisdom to direct, fulness of power to defend, fulness of worth to satisfy God’s justice and to merit man’s salvation; fulness of righteousness to justify, fulness of holiness to sanctify, fulness of mercy to pardon, fulness of supplies to meet every want. All this fulness is communicated to the Church. As the wife partakes of the estate of her husband, so does the Lamb’s bride partake of all His riches. “All things are ours, for we are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.”

The idea of the apostle is, that though Christ fills all in all, yet He is not complete without His perfected Church; or that the Church as a body consisting of all its members is the consummation of His fulness. His relative and declarative fulness in the perfection of its proportionate excellency is to be seen only in the connexion which exists between Him and His people. In them He manifests the fulness of His love, of His grace, of His righteousness, of His merits, of His sufficiency to save to the uttermost all that come to God through Him. In them His effectual working is exhibited as a full and perfect Redeemer. In them He attains to the great object of His Mediatorship. In them is manifested His infinite power in subduing the evil propensities of the human heart, and destroying the works of the devil. In them His wisdom is displayed in carrying out all the purposes of Divine love comprehended in a covenant of grace. And in them all His perfections will be for ever magnified in the presence of angels both in heaven and hell. Should one

member of His body be wanting, His fulness would not be complete. There would be a gem deficient in the crown of glory—a chord wanting in the harp of praise. “The fulness of Him that filleth all in all.”

This mystical union between Christ and the Church is full of wonders. There consists in it a complication of interests, as well as a communication of influences. As the head and the body, or as the husband and wife have their united interests, so Christ and His Church are mutually concerned for each other. They stand and fall, live and die together. Whatever He has is theirs, they have nothing but through Him—they have all things in Him and by Him, His God is their God, His Father is their Father, His blood—His merits—His Spirit—His life—His death are theirs. All that He did, and is doing, was and is done as the Church’s representative. He obeyed as her Head—He died as her Head—He rose and ascended as her Head—He reigns as her Head, and has in her name taken possession of heaven as a purchased inheritance for her. Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift! May we feel that we are members incorporate of His highly privileged Church, that we may share of the “fulness of Him that filleth all in all.”

The Twenty-second Sunday after Trinity.

MORNING SERVICE.—Second Lesson : Luke xiv.

Verse 23.—“ *And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.*”

OUR Saviour was of a sociable disposition, He delighted in the society of men, and whether He was invited by a Pharisee or a Publican, He did not disdain to go. He went to neither for the pleasure of gratifying His appetite, but for the opportunity of conversing with them, and of doing them good. These seasons of social intercourse He improved for the benefit of His fellow-guests. Not only did He manifest His wisdom by the instructive lessons which He taught, but He also manifested His power by the wonderful miracles which He wrought on those occasions ; thus He rewarded all classes for their hospitable entertainments. When He went to a chief of the Publicans He brought salvation into his house ; when he went to a chief of the Pharisees He exercised His healing virtue in his house. *They* entertained Him with the supplies of nature, *He* entertained them with the supplies of grace. The Publicans and sinners were directed to the Physician who could meet their case as those who were sick ; the Pharisees and lawyers were directed to that which was lawful, whether it corresponded with their self-righteous prejudices or not. The motives of those persons were not always good when they invited Christ to be their guest. The rules of hospitality were often violated by the Pharisees in making their tables a snare to catch Him, hoping that they might hear something from Him, or see something in Him for which they might accuse Him ; but His conduct was above blame :

neither could their hypocrisy nor open attacks detect a flaw in His character; on all occasions they had to retire wiser if not better men.

This chapter brings before us one of those occasions. "He went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread on the Sabbath-day;" when they watched Him, but watched in vain. The Sabbath-day for which they professed great veneration was made the question of testing His conduct. Would He heal on the Sabbath-day, or would He not? If He would, they thought that they should be able to establish a charge of desecration and profanity against Him, thus bringing Him under the penalty of the Jewish law respecting the Sabbath. But those people, with all their self-importance and conceited wisdom, did not understand the real meaning of their own law. He asked them a question on the practical application of the law, which at once confounded and silenced if it did not convince them. "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath-day?" To prove the lawfulness of the act He appeals to their own practice in pulling out on the Sabbath-day an ass or an ox that had fallen into a pit; as if He had said, if it be lawful for you to help a *beast* on the Sabbath-day, how can it be sinful in Me to help a *man*? The force of His argument they were compelled to acknowledge; their mouths were closed, although their prejudices were not removed. "And they could not answer him again to these things."

Then, having given them salutary instructions respecting public feasts, He further taught them some important truths by introducing a parable which involved the interests of both Jews and Gentiles, and showed the ample provision which was made for the entertainment of all classes. This parable of the great supper was intended to shew the freeness and fulness as well as the varieties and delicacies contained in the Gospel, and it also set forth that the gracious offer of mercy and salvation was first to be made by the preaching of the Gospel to the Jews, and then upon the Jews despising and rejecting this inestimable favour, that God purposed to receive the Gentiles into the marriage supper of the Lamb.

In the portion of the parable which we have read for our text is declared,

First, the universality of the Gospel invitation ; secondly, the nature of the Gospel invitation ; and thirdly, the object of the Gospel invitation. The universality of the invitation is to be seen in the servant being sent out into the highways and hedges ; the nature of the invitation is to be seen in the mode of his address ; and the object of the invitation is to be seen in the concluding declaration of the lord of the feast.

I. The *universality* of the Gospel invitation is to be seen in the command given to the servant to "Go out into the highways and hedges." In the body of the parable we are taught the progressive stages by which the advancement of the Gospel was to be promoted. First, there were those who had already received the invitation to the supper, in which reference is made to the Jews as a nation, who had enjoyed all the privileges of the Old Testament Church, and were first to be honoured with the offer of the New Testament blessings. The Redeemer Himself was sent to preach only "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." During His life the disciples also were to confine their ministry to the same people. "Go not," He tells them, "into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not." And upon His departure from them into heaven, He left a command, "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, *beginning at Jerusalem.*" In obedience to the command, such was the practice of the apostles. The preaching of the day of Pentecost was confined exclusively to that nation, and for some time afterwards they were the only persons to whom the appeals of the Gospel were applied. When "they with one consent began to make excuse," the invitation was extended, secondly, to the proselytes as being in "the streets and lanes of the city," and, finally, to all nations dwelling in the "highways and hedges" of the world.

This universal invitation may be applied—

1. To all classes of society. The distinction of classes

amongst men are both necessary for the order of society and useful for the welfare of all. The prince and the peasant, the high and the low, the governor and the governed, the employer and the employed, preserve the equilibrium of order ; without this distinction anarchy and confusion would reign supreme, and the world would be a chaos of inconsistencies and mismanagement. But weighing society in the scale of God, the balance is held with an even hand. Except when He, in His providence, bestows the greater advantages, He expects the greater returns by way of gratitude and usefulness. The only distinction in His estimation is the distinction of responsibility. Where much is given, much is required. The precedency of intellect, of wealth, or of rank involves the greater obligations, so that the higher we are raised in the order of privileges, the more important the work which we have to perform. When we come to regard mankind as the objects of Gospel invitation, all classes are placed on one level. There is but one way of salvation for all ; "one faith, one hope, one baptism, one God the Father of all," who calls upon all to obtain a common salvation. Those who dwell in the streets and the lanes of the city, whether they be poor, or maimed, or halt, or blind, and those who are in the highways and hedges, of whatever station, are equally invited, and equally welcome.

How this should bind together not only the different nations of the world, but also the different classes of men. Why should the man of the "gold ring" despise him of the "vile raiment," since his "goodly apparel" is merely a distinction of providence, and not a distinction of grace ? His relative position to God is the same, his soul is of equal value, he has been purchased with the same price of the Saviour's blood, and he is called to hold an equal position in the Church below and in heaven above.

2. This may be applied to persons of all characters. The self-righteous Pharisee is invited to come, but not to the exclusion of the Publican and sinner. The latter may have greater practical sins to deplore, greater offences to repent of, greater stains to be washed away ; but the former must be

stripped of the garb of his own righteousness, as it will not be admitted for an appropriate garment to enter the guest chamber. The love that can forgive *one* can cover a *multitude* of sins—the grace that suggested the feast can prepare the guests. All being too unworthy to merit admission, not one is too sinful to secure a gratuitous share in the banquet. When the servant was ordered to go out into the highways and the hedges, he was not to enquire *who* they were, nor *what* they were, whom he invited. Some of them might have sunk into the very depth of iniquity, and might have been guilty of every sin that blackens the catalogue of human depravity, they might have been extortioners, liars, drunkards, adulterers, perjurers, thieves, and even murderers; they were all to receive the offer of salvation—all to be invited to partake of the supper which had been prepared. Oh, brethren, what an encouragement there is here to those who feel themselves despised and rejected by men for the greatness of their crimes. They feel that the world turns away from them in disgust, those who were once their friends shut their doors against them with an air of contempt, and the idea may cross their minds that even parents have ceased to weep over them, and to pray for them, their condition appears so hopeless; but hope is kindled in the breast when listening to such words as these, “Let the wicked forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and unto our God, for he will abundantly pardon.” “It is a true saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” “The Son of man is come to seek and to save them that are lost.” “Him that cometh unto me I will in nowise cast out.” Does not a voice whisper to the soul of the greatest sinner, “Christ has died for you; God invites you: His door will be open at your approach; you may yet find a home in His house, and be happy.” Mary Magdalene, whose sins were many, being forgiven; the Jailor of Philippi, who was a monster of cruelty, being saved; Saul of Tarsus, who was a blasphemer and persecutor, being made a vessel of

mercy, let none despair. "Be of good cheer, He calleth thee," sinner, whoever thou art. The minister of the Gospel, also, who is the servant sent forth, is cheered by the fact that he has no selections to make; he is to call upon all, and never to doubt but that his master will receive the vilest that come. Whether we are called upon to carry the mission to the heathen of foreign lands, or to the heathen of our own land, we do it in confidence that all who obey the calling shall be admitted to the marriage-supper of the Lamb.

II. Let us regard the *nature* of the invitation—"Compel them to come in." It is not to be an arbitrary, but a persuasive compulsion; not a compulsion of physical force, but of moral influence; not the compulsion of nature, but of grace; not the compulsion of power, but the attraction of love. God has instituted a freedom of action in all His works, so that every item of His creation acts willingly and naturally according to the established law by which it is regulated. The solar system regards its revolutions without any compulsive agency to force it to its duty; the flow and ebb of the ocean requires no arbitrary force to make them observe the end for which they are intended; the river flows naturally downwards, winding itself through the valleys until it reaches the sea; the spark flies naturally upwards; all the functions of animal life are performed without oppression; the body, when in a state of perfect health, requires no painful effort to breathe and to act. The God of nature is the God of grace. He treats man as an intelligent being, governing him by a law peculiar to Himself; He shows him what is good, reasons with him, invites him, attracts him with His love, and makes him "willing in the day of His power." He does not drag him to heaven, nor force him to accept of mercy. "Compel them to come in," not by violence, but by argument; not by external force nor by temporal punishment, but by plain and persuasive reasoning. The "weapons of our warfare are (not to be) carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds." The powerful and efficacious preaching of the

Gospel, accompanied by the invitations and influences of the Holy Spirit, are the compulsions here intended.

The expression signifies—

1. A reluctance and obstinacy on the part of the persons invited. "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God." "They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh," and have an indwelling repugnance to the things of the Spirit. It is a thing not only to be bewailed but to be astonished at, that man should hate what is for his own good—that he should despise and reject the only means which can constitute his present and future happiness. But both Scripture and experience prove this to be the case; therefore, he requires the strongest motives to urge him to accept the things which belong to his peace. St. Paul, in the name of his brethren, declares that knowing the terror of the Lord, they persuaded men, and being ambassadors for Christ, they prayed them in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God. Marvel, ye heavens, be astonished, ye earth, that the sick should despise his physician, that the prisoner should despise his liberty, that the poor should despise wealth, that the naked should despise clothing, that the hungry should despise bread, that the thirsty should despise drink, that the lost should despise refuge, that the dead should despise life! Oh, poor, miserable, degraded man! It signifies—

2. The pleasure and earnestness with which God invites sinners to obtain mercy. When God calls, He calls in earnest. He does not merely send a careless message that man may be without excuse; but He expresses the most anxious interest in man's welfare, and the most sincere wish that he should comply with the conditions of his own salvation. The uniform strain of all the appeals of the Bible manifests this earnestness on the part of God. Read the following, Deut. xxxii. 29; Isaiah lv. 1; Ezekiel xviii. 23, 32; 1 Tim. ii. 4; 2 Peter iii. 9. The sacrifice which He has made in the gift of His only-begotten Son—the fulness of the provisions which He has prepared in Him—the assurance

which He has given of the help of His Holy Spirit ; and all the facilities which He has placed at the disposal of the believing penitent, combine to declare His willingness to forgive, and the pleasure which He feels in the gracious reception of all who come.

Let us observe—

III. The object of the invitation : “That my house may be filled.” God’s house is His Church, which is divided into two departments : the one upon earth, the other in heaven. Here He dwells, and vouchsafes to bestow His presence in an especial manner. In the department upon earth He has engaged to be in the midst of His people whenever two or three are met together in His name. As in the temple of old He manifested His presence through the medium of the Shekinah, He still displays the perfections of His grace through the ordinances of His sanctuary. But it is in the heavenly department the fulness of His presence is realized. There He is to be seen without one intervening cloud, and His communion enjoyed by all the guests without intermission.

In heaven the house shall be filled. On earth the guests meet in separate companies, and one company succeeds another. One generation goeth and another cometh, but all pass through the same department. Patriarchs and prophets, apostles and evangelists, martyrs and confessors, all passed through this portion of the house, and serving their generation here in the fear of God, they went successively to take their seats in the mansion above. Those from the streets and the lanes of the city, and those from the highways and hedges take their places here in turn, and are then transferred to swell up the company in the heavenly guest chamber. Oh, brethren ! there is a glorious company at the right hand above. We cannot pretend to describe it. No art can picture it—every likeness fails—every emblem is but a shadow. The brightest delineation dims into obscurity when attempting to represent the heavenly feast : if we were to think for ever we

shall not be able to find words to set forth the grandeur and ecstasy of that result of redeeming love. All the company are clad in garments white and clean, having washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Those who were despised upon earth on account of their national or personal infirmities are perfect there, not having spot nor wrinkle, nor any such thing.

But the house is not yet filled. The "many mansions" which our Saviour declared to be in His Father's house are not all yet occupied. There are seats I trust waiting to be occupied by us. Thousands are yet to "come from the east and from the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven." The completion will not take place until the time shall arrive referred to by St. John in his vision, when he "beheld, and lo, a great multitude which no man could number," &c. Rev. vii. 9.

Brethren, shall we be there? If so, we must first join the feast upon earth. We may be called to partake of it here with bitter herbs; still it is a feast, comprising the bread of life which shall never perish, and the living water which springeth up into everlasting life. You that have commenced the feast look forward with joy, you shall soon be satisfied in the house above. And, "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." No longer spend your money, your strength, your time, much less your immortal souls, for "that which satisfieth not;" but enter into God's house, where abundance is provided for all.

The Twenty-second Sunday after Trinity.

EVENING SERVICE.—First Lesson : Prov. iii.

Verse 8.—“ *Let not mercy and truth forsake thee : bind them about thy neck ; write them upon the table of thine heart.*”

IN no instance did the wisdom of Solomon shine more conspicuously than in the pious instructions which he gave to his son. If by that son is intended Rehoboam who succeeded him on the throne, the sequel proves that he did not value his father's instructions as he ought to have done, for instead of seeking that wisdom which he recommended he commenced and continued his reign by many acts of folly. How often does it happen that children despise the prudent advice of good parents, and follow their own inclinations to their own temporal and spiritual ruin. In this book we have a series of proverbs which hang like pearls upon a string, and which for their beauty and usefulness, are not equalled by any others known in the world. The string on which those pearls are suspended is here represented under the name of wisdom ; not merely that worldly wisdom which is the foundation of science and natural prudence, but that wisdom, the beginning of which “is the fear of the Lord”—a heavenly, sanctifying wisdom which pervades the mind of every true lover of God, and which actuates the exercise of all other graces mentioned both in this book and throughout the whole sacred scriptures. Two of those graces are mentioned in our text, which may be regarded among the chief ornaments of wisdom, or true religion.

We shall therefore notice First, the ornamental graces here mentioned ; Secondly, the public exhibition of those graces required ; and Thirdly, the internal groundwork of those graces proposed.

I. The ornamental graces here mentioned, "mercy and truth."

These two graces are so near akin that they are frequently joined together in the word of God. Hosea says, "The Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land," and in the twentieth chapter of this book Solomon says, "Mercy and truth preserve the king." Mercy and truth with the ancient saints were equivalent to the gospel, or the grace of God in truth with believers in Christ. In God mercy and truth meet in perfection. His mercy is revealed to us in His promises, and His truth in His faithfulness to accomplish them. When they meet in man they raise His character above the standard of ordinary men, for they are not the offspring of nature, but the production of grace. Some persons may be naturally compassionate, arising not from a motive of conscience, or respect to God, but from a natural tenderness which seems to be innate in their constitution, who therefore overlook the justice or injustice of their actions in their dealings with others, whilst others make great boast of justice regardless of tenderness and compassion, however favourable the case may appear in itself. But since God has joined them, there is the same obligation to both, for either of them without the other is not in obedience to Him. Though joined, they may be noticed separately, as they have their respective operations, and in the sequel the latter qualifies the former.

1. Mercy is an affectionate pity to such as are in misery and distress, accompanied with a readiness to do them good; or it may be designated an act of kindness proceeding from an inward desire to relieve such as are in want. This is one of the most commendable traits belonging to human nature; it is in a measure natural to man. We perceive it manifested in the conduct of the child, and there is nothing but a long practice of sin hardening the heart that can eradicate it from the bosom. Some indeed are more susceptible to feelings of compassion than others, but there is something in the constitution of our nature which draws out our sympathy,

seeing or hearing of a fellow creature in extreme suffering gives us pain. Under certain circumstances the most cruel are touched with a feeling of compassion. It is recorded by Plato, of a tyrant of Pyrhæa, who was in the habit of butchering his own subjects without mercy, that when he witnessed the tragedy of Hecuba and Andromache enacted in a theatre, he wept over their suffering like a child; not that his heart was changed, but being an impartial spectator of the cruelty of the scene, his mind was more acute and unprejudiced than when the innocent Pyrhæans were suffering under his own hand. The feeling may be regarded as a gracious provision of God to secure, in some degree, the comfort of His creatures by making them warders of each other's happiness. Doubtless early training and the habit of helping others go far to influence tenderness of heart, and to make one man differ from another in this, as well as in other things. The feeling is capable of great improvement; under excitement it may perform acts of astounding charity, or it may settle down into a respectable uniform philanthropy. Reason ought to have a share in conducting the operations of mercy, but reason independently of compassion would be tardy in the selection of subjects on whom mercy should be bestowed. Reason instructs us to choose mercy and charity rather than oppression and cruelty, but compassion makes us feel for the sufferings of others, much more than it is possible for the bare consideration of the difference between good and evil, the deserving and undeserving ever to do. Whilst we listen to the pleadings of reason, and discard those of compassion, the young and the aged, the sick and the maimed would remain unrelieved, and the comfortless would remain without a comforter. Reason is given us not to nullify the tenderer affections but to regulate them in a right course of action. In the constituted circumstances of the present life, there is none so truly virtuous and honourable as the man in whose conduct the rectitude of reason is combined with the tenderness of mercy.

After all there is none truly merciful except those who

have obtained mercy. In them mercy is not a passion but a principle—a principle which does not confound Christian charity with the benevolent and kind feeling of which the heart of man naturally is not destitute. Such persons comply with the sentiments of St. Paul in writing to the Colossians, "Put on, therefore, (as the elect of God, holy and beloved) bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another and forgiving one another; if any man have a quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave you, even also do ye." This Christian grace of mercy is quite a distinct thing from the natural benevolent feelings of a man's heart. A person may be amiable, courteous, kind, and hospitable; in general esteem he may be a good husband, father, friend, and neighbour; more than this, he may be laborious and self-denying in kindness—may visit the sick, feed the poor, clothe the naked, and be liberal in the distribution of alms; and yet be a perfect stranger to that principle of mercy which alone the holy scriptures recognise. God regards the motive more than the outward act; there is a distinctness in the motive, a dignity in the origin, a largeness in the measure of Christian mercy.

2. Another virtue enforced by Solomon in the text as necessary for the adornment of an acceptable character is *truth*. Truth in the abstract is the harmony of thoughts, feelings, words, and actions with the real state of things. Limited as our capacities are, we perfectly understand that truth is entirely honourable and glorious to the character of an intelligent being. Falsehood, on the other hand, we perceive to be odious, disgraceful, and contemptible. This respect for truth and contempt for falsehood is irresistible in the mind, it is an established law of nature. However it may be carried out in practice by respective individuals, the feeling is entertained by all. Knaves, as truly and as irresistible as honest men, despise knaves whilst they practise knavery in its vilest forms. God has made truth absolutely necessary to the happiness of mankind, and falsehood in-

variably productive of misery; thus in His providence He forces mankind to esteem and respect truth. The happiness of intelligent beings is chiefly derived from society, but no society can exist without confidence, and there can be no confidence without truth; it is the basis on which society rests; even thieves and robbers are obliged to speak truth to each other in order to maintain their dreadful society. Without truth happiness can never be enjoyed, distrust would create in the mind an awful state of suspense and misery. All enjoyments would hang in doubt before the eyes; safety and quiet could never be attained.

Truth may be divided into two branches; first, a disposition always to speak according to the real state of things; and secondly, a disposition always to fulfil faithfully the covenants and promises which are made. These two establish the character of God as a Promoter of truth; of Christ as the Mediator of truth; of the gospel as a declaration of truth; and would, if practised to the desired extent, establish a true and lasting bond of union between man and man, and between nation and nation. "Let not mercy and truth forsake thee." It is the greatest calamity that can befall an individual to be deserted by these two virtues; they raise to the highest pitch of honour of which society is capable.

We observe—

II. The public exhibition of those virtues required.
"Bind them about thy neck."

These are practical virtues which must be shown in the application of all other virtues, as everything depends upon the truthfulness of our conduct for the benefit of ourselves and others. The allusion is evidently to Exodus xiii. 9. "And it shall be for a sign unto thee upon thine hand, and for a memorial between thine eyes, that the Lord's law be in thy mouth," and Deut. v. 6—9. "And these words which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart, &c." Whence the custom of the Jews in making broad their phylacteries, wearing portions of the Divine law on the

different parts of their bodies. This custom our Saviour condemned, not because they kept the law constantly before their eyes, but because they did it out of ostentation and hypocrisy, out of ambition and vain glory to be seen of, and to be applauded by men, whilst they omitted the weightier matters of the law. To do good works that men may see them is a duty; but to do good works from the sole motive of being seen by men is hypocrisy, and is justly condemned. Acts of mercy and adherence to truth must be open and unreserved, and ought to be observed at any cost. They may be attended with self-denial and painful sacrifices—the loss of friends, the loss of property, and the loss of station may be the result; but happy is the man who can brave all, and say with David, “I have not swerved from thy law.”

Alas, how often are those virtues sacrificed at the shrine of selfish aggrandisement, or commercial expediency! There are thousands who are so wrapped up in themselves that their feelings are petrified against the claims of hunger, of thirst, of nakedness, or of any other calamity; whilst there are thousands of others who would do an act of kindness if it may not interfere with their own ease and comfort, but they cannot be put out of the way though the cries of distress reached the very threshold of their own doors. As for truth, it lies bleeding in every street, in every court, in almost every counting-house, in every manufactory, in every store, in every workshop; yes, I fear more or less in every house. Misrepresentations in words and in actions blacken the history of nations, and dim the lustre of individual character. Whither shall we go to meet with that upright honesty which is so highly approved of God, and is so highly honourable to man? Shall we find it in the courts of civil justice? Let the misrepresentations of the counsel table, and the perjuries of the witness box answer. Shall we find it among the higher ranks of society? Let the flatteries of courtesy, and the hypocrisies of refinement answer. Shall we find it in the trade and commerce of our country? Let the alloys in metals, and the adulterations in goods answer,

Shall we find it among the working and lower classes of the land? Let the fabrication of excuses and the impositions of deceit answer. Expediency seems to be the order of the day. In the competition of trade one person tries to undersell another; and in the endeavour to make both ends meet he scruples not to cheat his neighbour, although he sacrifices the peace of his own mind, and perhaps undermines the constitution of customers with slow poison. In the attempt to keep up artificial appearances, trying to do as others do, wholesale robberies are committed under the cloak of respectability. Thus an almost universal system of deceit fosters heart-burnings and troubles, and destroys the confidence and happiness of mankind. Conscience speaks in favour of truth, but self-interest hushes its voice, and expediency urges us onward to sacrifice one of the brightest gems in the casket of God's graces to man. Like Pilate, we may sometimes pause to ask "What is truth?" but like him conscience will not allow us to wait for an answer, for in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred we should feel self-condemned. Happy is he who can stand forth in defence of this blessed principle in spite of inconvenience and temporary loss. No ornament of the most costly diamonds that ever graced the neck of a princess can be compared in value to this neck ornament of mercy and truth. It will invariably pay in the end; should it not at the time meet with the approval of men, it will meet with the highest approval of Him who exercises both, in an infinite degree.

Let us notice briefly—

III. The internal groundwork of those graces proposed. "Write them on the table of thine heart." The reference is to the custom of engraving upon stone to render an inscription legible and permanent. Thus the ten commandments were written by the finger of God on two tables of stone, and thus was the ancient custom of inscribing records of consequence to preserve them from decay. When Job desired that his experience of hope in the midst of his trials should

be recorded for the encouragement of future generations, he said, "O that my words were now written, O that they were printed in a book!" then to express his anxiety for the permanency of his sentiments he added, "That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever." To secure the permanency of mercy and truth, Solomon suggested them to be engraven on the table of the heart. The heart is the spring of every action, the source whence issue all principles both good and evil. Our Saviour, speaking of the things which defile a man, says, "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false-witnesses, blasphemies." As evil thoughts, which are productive of evil actions proceed from the heart, so do all good thoughts which are productive of outward acts of mercy and truth proceed from the same source. To secure a consistent exercise of them in the life of an individual, the principle must be established, and deeply rooted within. To secure pure streams of water, the fountain must be pure; no process of filtering can fully extricate the impurities, if the spring be corrupt. When Eliha was asked to heal the waters of Jericho, he went at once to the spring, and cast the salt in there, and said, "Thus saith the Lord, I have healed these waters; there shall not be from thence any more death." Pure streams of mercy and truth flow only from the heart which has been purified by the influences of God's Spirit, which, like the salt in the fountain, heals the tendency to evil and death.

Then, to exhibit the principles which are here so highly recommended, we must watch the workings of our hearts within. What is written on that table? whatever it be, it is perfectly read by Him who "desires truth in the inward parts;" and however things may be glossed over to blind the eyes of fellow men, the real principles of the heart will some time or the other manifest themselves even to men. "Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God;" they are also seen of God, and approved of God; and men are made to see their good works, and glorify their Father who is in

heaven. Let us then submit our hearts to the touchstone of God's Word; and when we have conscientiously examined ourselves, let us pray with the Psalmist, "Search me, O God, and know my heart, &c." (Ps. cxxxix. 23, 24.) "Let mercy and truth never forsake thee." In youth nor in old age, in prosperity nor in adversity, in wealth nor in poverty, in health nor in sickness, in life nor in death. However tempted by man or by Satan, "buy the truth, and sell it not." A blessing will then attend you in life, in death, and throughout eternity.

The Twenty-third Sunday after Trinity.

MORNING SERVICE.—First Lesson: Proverbs xi.

Verse 30.—“*And he that winneth souls is wise.*”

THIS, however, is not the sentiment entertained by the world at large. Wisdom, according to the general acceptation, consists in something very different. The man who can advance the profoundest theories of philosophical learning, the man who can take out the greatest number of patents for scientific inventions, the man who can strike out the most extensive artistic discoveries, the man who can produce the most useful scheme for commercial improvement, is the man who is regarded the wisest in the estimation of his fellow-men as a whole. Such a man possesses wisdom of the most useful and commendable nature, and he cannot fail to command the admiration and respect of all right-minded persons; still, he holds but a subordinary position when compared with the man who is made the honoured instrument of saving souls. In the Gospel estimation of the term to win souls is to reclaim sinners from the error of their ways; “To turn them from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins.” The word *winneth* expresses the genial character of the act, and the absence of all compulsory means in the conversion of sinners. It is consistent with the expressions employed in the book of the prophet Jeremiah, “Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee;” and in the book of the prophet Hosea, “I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love.” As also expressed by our Saviour, “No man can come unto me, except the Father who has sent me draw him.” God *draws*, He does not *drive*. He treats man as a rational being and a free agent, giving full and free

action to his understanding, and placing no violence upon his will but that of the attraction of love. Those whom He employs as the instruments of His grace are to carry out His designs consistently with the clemency of His infinite wisdom.

The text suggests, first, the prize to be won ; and secondly, the exalted character of the winner.

I. The prize to be won. He that winneth *souls*.

The prizes of life are classified according to their value, according to the difficulty of obtaining them, and according to the honour connected with their possession. These three things may be regarded in reference to the great prize of our text.

1. We regard it in its real value. The highest prizes cast into the great lottery bag of this world are not to be equalled with this. We estimate the value of those by the calculation of pounds, shillings, and pence ; and if they amount to thousands, or at furthest to a few millions, we are satisfied that our fortune is made, and the remainder of our lives is too often spent in defending the treasure. But no arithmetical table has yet been discovered, nor ever will be discovered, to calculate the worth of a soul. The Lord Jesus Christ, who best knew its value, asked the comprehensive question, "For what is a man profited if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul ; or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul ?" There is no equivalent here, a world with all its coveted stores is inadequate to purchase it. Its mines of precious ores, its beds of pearls, its quarries of diamonds, its groves of fruits, its repositories of spices, its granaries of corn are but as dust in the balance when placed opposite to one soul. The price required to redeem it was no less than the heart-blood of God's own Son. Surely, nothing of earth could counterbalance that. We attach great importance to the life of the body. "All that a man hath will he give for his life." How deeply was this felt by the passengers and crew on board the "London" steamer when she foundered on her passage from Australia to England a few months ago.

How deeply was it felt by that young lady who is described as being about twenty-three years of age, and who, with a face livid with horror, shrieked out to the men escaping in a boat, "A thousand pounds if you will take me in!" If the life of the body, which is but a question of a few years, be regarded by us of so high a value, what must be the soul that is to survive the most durable substance in nature, that is to witness the "wreck of matter and the crash of worlds," and is to continue throughout the countless ages of eternity, either in unalloyed happiness or in irremediable woe.

2. We regard this prize in the difficulty of obtaining it. If a person would win a substantial prize he must devote himself to labour, deprive himself of rest, and often make great sacrifices of feeling and inclination. It is not to be effected by self-indulgence and indifference. The object must be constantly kept in view, and every nerve must be exerted to attain the end. The winner of souls can enjoy no sinecure in life; if any one can be slothful in business, he cannot, both his mind and body must be engaged in the work. He is to watch, to instruct, to invite, to plead, to warn, to encourage; being "instant in season and out of season," "a workman that needeth not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." The prophet Ezekiel was commanded to "eat (his) bread with quaking, and drink (his) water with trembling and with carefulness," that he might cause Jerusalem to know her abominations, and warn the house of Israel of her danger. St. Paul was made all things to all men, that he might by all means save some. He made himself servant unto all, that he might gain the more. The difficulties of winning are chiefly created by the resistance of opposing powers. No resistance is so great as that to the saving of souls. The Devil, like a strong man armed, exerts his utmost power in opposition to all that is good. His agents, instigated by his wiles, never rest in their efforts to wrest from the mind every tendency to the fear of God; whilst the corrupt customs of the world lend a helping hand to keep the soul in the shackles of iniquity and death. But the strongest

resistance is in the soul itself. "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be;" and "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know him, because they are spiritually discerned." To meet such internal and external opposition the winners of souls need be wise as serpents as well as harmless as doves; a prudent perseverance is absolute to subdue it, for in connection with such God vouchsafes to bestow His Spirit, without whom nothing is holy, nothing is perfect, nothing is strong.

8. Let us again regard it in the honour connected with the act. There is an honour in winning some prizes which raises a man in the estimation of others during the remainder of his life, and hands down his name to posterity surrounded with a renown which may endure for generations. So great was the honour of winning the prize at the Grecian games that even kings competed for it, and the fortunate winner, of whatever station, was made a freeman for life. A far higher honour is conferred upon them that win souls. "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many unto righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." Daniel xii. 3. They may not receive the plaudits of the world; on the contrary, they may be neglected, despised, and ridiculed. The humble missionary may go forth to the wilds of Africa, and spend a life of toil and mortification and sorrow in winning souls, and then die without an earthly friend to cheer his expiring moments. The trudging devoted minister of the Gospel, the Scripture-reader, the Bible woman, the tract distributor, or the private Christian in the more humble walks of life, may go from street to street, from court to court, from house to house, and from cellar to cellar in our large cities and towns, and no mention made of their acts and labour of love in the records of their time; but their record is above, they have the consciousness of being approved of God, who has engaged to crown them with glory and immortal honour when their work is done. Oh, brethren,

the lustre of this honour dims into eternal midnight the highest honours which this world can confer, and ought to excite us to energy and perseverance, not only in securing the salvation of our own souls, but in furthering the spiritual welfare of others.

We observe—

II. The exalted character of those who are thus made the instruments of winning souls. "He that winneth souls is wise."

The contrast is often drawn between wealth and wisdom, and the question is asked, whether of the two exalts a person to the highest position in life? Wealth may give power and influence, but the contingencies connected with it cause such uncertainties that the millionaire of to-day may be the beggar of to-morrow. Wisdom, on the other hand, while it commands the respect of all, transfers its benefits to generations yet unborn. The power acquired by Croesus died with his untold treasures, but the influence of Solon is felt to the present day, and will be felt as long as the world shall continue. Of all wisdom, however, that of winning souls is the most substantial and durable. Other wisdom affects matter, this affects spirit; other men are wise for time, the winner of souls is wise for eternity.

There are three reasons for which this epithet may be applied.

1. The act of winning souls carries out the plans which are the result of the highest effort of God's own wisdom. God's wisdom has been displayed in all the works of creation, and in the arrangement of Providence. It warms in the sun, and glows in the moon. It shines in every star, it blows in every breeze; it buds in every tree, it grows in every blade; it blossoms in every flower, it influences every circumstance of life. We cannot but admire its operations in every object of nature, constituting punctuality and order from one season and generation to another. These things after all are but a "part of His ways," manifesting an ordinary effort of an in-

finite mind; wonderful, indeed, to us, because our limited capacities are too contracted to comprehend the workings of Divine wisdom. Our intellect is in its infancy yet, we shall know more hereafter, although we cannot expect ever to possess a perfect knowledge of even those ordinary acts of His wisdom. Still, the things which angels "desire to look into" are the things which give the most extensive display of the infinitely profound. The why and the wherefore of man's redemption through Christ will ever remain a mystery to the highest finite intelligence. Eternity shall involve in its bosom the combined intellects of time; those intellects shall continually expand as they wade in the tide of a fathomless ocean; but the deeper they wade into the repositories of Divine love, the more mysterious will appear the acts of that wisdom which, without any compulsory motive, devoted a Son, a beloved and only begotten Son, to poverty, to torture, and to death, merely to rescue from perdition a rebellious race, who did their utmost to resist His will, to cloud His glory, and to subvert His throne. What a matchless instance of wisdom do we see in the fact that the sufferings of one innocent Person was accepted as an atonement for the guilt of innumerable millions; and that those millions, in spite of the most obstinate resistance, should be compelled by the simple means of a declaration, spread and propounded by a number of themselves, to cast voluntarily their weapons of rebellion at the feet of their Sovereign, and to sue for mercy in the name of Him who atoned for their sins! Nothing can equal this. We contemplate it in ecstasies, and sinking in admiration we acknowledge ourselves vanquished in the effort to decipher it. How exalted, then, must be the character of him whom God graciously sees fit to make the humble instrument in His hand to effect such an object! "He that winneth souls is wise."

2. Such a person answers the end of his creation, by applying his powers to the realization of the highest object.

Man was never intended to exist in this world merely for the indulgence of his own appetites, or for the promotion of

his own selfish aggrandisement. If so, God would never have endowed him with such sublime powers of reflection and action. The brute possesses all the sensations of physical life to an equal extent, as far as we know, as they are possessed by man, whilst in some of the functions of the body the brute has the ascendancy. In many instances it is swifter, stronger, and more beautifully adorned by nature. Thus we must feel our inferiority except on higher ground than self-gratification. God says: "For I have created him for my glory; I have formed him, yea, I have made him." To carry out this end, man, in addition to a tacit submission to God's will, an active obedience to God's commands, and a public celebration of God's praise, must exercise a practical devotion to the interests of his fellow men. He who devotes himself to the temporal benefit of others—he who contributes to the stores of knowledge, and furthers the progress of science—he who relieves the poor, the sick, and the dying—he who promotes domestic comfort and happiness by acts of philanthropy, is worthy of honour and respect, and is entitled to be esteemed wise in his generation; but the highest wisdom consists in the promotion of the spiritual welfare of mankind, inasmuch as the soul is infinitely more valuable than the body, as eternity is infinitely more durable than time. With all deference to the wise of this world, we must give (because God gives) the preference to the wise of another. The end of creation is in a measure answered by acts of temporal philanthropy, but it is more fully answered by acts of spiritual exertion. "He that winneth souls is wise."

8. It creates a principle of wisdom in the wonned souls themselves. They are "made wise unto salvation." "The darkness is past, and the true light now shineth." "The god of this world" no longer blinds the mind, but the "light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, shines therein." The light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ chases away the gloom of ignorance and the deeds of darkness. The ways of folly which lead to

sin, to ruin, and to death are forsaken, and the ways of that wisdom from above, which is "first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy," are sought and walked in. A glorious change is produced by the introduction of this wisdom. In the case of St. Paul, he who was a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious, obtained mercy: in the case of the Ephesians, they who were dead in trespasses and sins were quickened into spiritual life and action: in the case of the gaoler of Philippi, he who was a tyrant, was saved with all his house. In the case of the Corinthians, they who were corrupt were sanctified. In the case of Onesimus, he who in time past was unprofitable became from henceforth profitable to all. Such are the results of winning souls. They are worthy of the profoundest intellects: they are worthy of angels: they are worthy of God.

Then, my brethren, if you would be wise to win souls you must be taught of God. Whatever natural prudence you may possess, or whatever amount of scholastic training you may have obtained; however wisely your plans may have been formed; however energetically they may be executed, all will be of no avail except they be accompanied with the direction and strength of His Spirit. Paul, with all his profound learning and unflinching energy, could but plant; and Apollos, with all his convincing eloquence, could but water—it was God who gave the increase. Man is but the active instrument. The hand that directs and gives power is above; but the instrument that yields to the guidance of the hand, and seeks to perform effectually the desired work is honoured with approbation, and is esteemed the wisest of men. "He that winneth souls is wise."

The Twenty-third Sunday after Trinity.

EVENING SERVICE.—Second Lesson : Col. iv.

Verse 5.—“ *Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time.*”

THE inhabitants of the world are divided into two great classes, the one being *within* the other *without* the Church of God. Those *within* are a select company called to be saints, and induced to dedicate themselves to the service of Christ; those *without* are the great mass who live in utter disregard of God's laws, and manifest the utmost contempt for Christ's religion. The Church is compared unto a garden walled around; all are not planted in it. The Church is called the house of God; all are not of the household of faith. The Church is a city; all are not fellow-citizens with the saints. The Church is Christ's kingdom upon earth; many are aliens from the commonwealth of Israel. All that have not heard the invitations of the gospel—all that have not submitted to the law of Christ—all that have not complied with the conditions of God's grace must be regarded as those without the Church. All intercourse between those who are within and those who are without is not forbidden; whilst we are in the world, we must be in a measure mixed up with the society of the world; it is impossible in our domestic and commercial transactions to separate ourselves solely from the fellowship of those who are without; there is an identity of interest—a necessity for the common prosperity which compels Christians to associate with their unchristian neighbours. Still there is a line of demarcation to be observed which ought not to be violated, and it is by a strict attention to this line the admonition of the apostle in our text can be fully complied with. “Walk in wisdom toward them that are without.”

The text therefore teaches us, first, the duty of Christians towards their irreligious neighbours. Secondly, the exemplary perseverance with which that duty should be observed.

I. The duty of Christians towards their irreligious neighbours. "Walk in wisdom toward them that are without."

Wisdom is a motive worthy of an upright intelligent being, carried out into useful actions, by appropriate means, at all appropriate seasons. It is a motive by which the Divine Being is Himself actuated in His dealings with all His creatures. As it exists in Him it is formed of His omniscience and infinite benevolence, united in planning and accomplishing all real good in the progress of His immense and eternal kingdom. It is also implanted by Him in a limited degree in the minds of angels and men to be exercised by them towards their Maker and towards each other for the best ends by the adoption of the best means. The application of the admonition of the apostle in the text involves a principle of great latitude, but imparts particularly an endeavour to promote the conversion and salvation of those who are without the pale of the Christian Church, by begetting in them a due veneration for the gospel and a decided love to the Christian religion.

There are two ways by which this is to be done—first, by a correct representation of the real principles of religion, and, secondly, by a proper treatment of others in the transactions of life.

1. We are to walk in wisdom towards them that are without, by a correct representation of the real principles of religion.

Nothing can be more detrimental to the progress of religion than the manner in which it is represented by some of its professors in both its doctrines and practices. Whilst all its doctrines contain the essence of the sublimest theories, exhibiting plans the most comprehensive, consistent, and adapted to advance the glory of its infinite Author, and to promote the reconciliation, the wellbeing, and the perfect

happiness of a rebellious world ; they are often set forth as contracted, partial, and inadequate to the wants of the objects whom they are designed to benefit. For instance, when mysteries are clothed in a still greater mystery—when God the Father is represented as an arbitrary Sovereign limiting His favours to a certain few, independent of character, instead of that universally gracious and benign Being as He is, “ not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance ”—when God the Son, becoming the man Christ Jesus, is represented to have shed His precious blood for a portion of mankind, as if His atonement were of a commercial nature, instead of having a reference to the Divine government, meeting the demands of justice *for sin as a whole*, thus rendering the salvation of *every* man consistent with the honour of God’s law—when God, the Holy Spirit, is represented as being periodically bestowed, instead of being always present in the word of truth—when the gospel is represented as a scheme contracted in its application and rigid in its requirements, instead of that broad system of mercy, comprehending all classes and characters within the scope of its invitations ; those without are repulsed and discouraged, being left in a condition of hopeless despondency. How should all Christians hold forth those heaven-born doctrines in all the beauty of their inviting proportions for the encouragement of all to seek the rich provisions which can make them wise unto salvation !

Then the practices of religion should be strictly attended to that it may be wisely recommended to others. Christians are “ the epistles of Christ ” “ known and read of all men.” As the epistle of Christ they are to set forth the character of Christ by following Him as their great exemplar. By looking at the character of Christ we find that it was respected and admired even by those who despised and rejected His doctrines. Yes, even Pilate, who condemned Him for nothing, could “ find no fault in Him ; ” and the centurion, heathen as he was, was compelled to acknowledge at His cross, “ Certainly this was a righteous man.” It is the example of

a consistent religious practice that tells chiefly on the minds of unbelievers ; in the sixth verse the apostle says, " Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how to answer every man." It may often be difficult to execute the necessary wisdom in the presence of a mixed society. To be cheerful without levity, to be holy without sanctimoniousness, to be serious without moroseness, to be decided without reserve, to be separate without exclusiveness, to be gentle without ostentation, to be courteous without flattery, to be truthful without accusation, to be just without sternness, are lessons which most of us have yet to learn ; and still they are the real practical parts of religion which above the most elaborate and convincing delineation of doctrine will recommend it to the attention and admiration of the world.

2. A proper treatment of others in the transactions of life is necessary to walk in wisdom toward them that are without. The duties of parents and children, of husbands and wives, of masters and servants, of governors and governed, as well as of persons in all stations of life are fully marked out by Christ and His apostles. Those duties require minute attention, especially by those who profess to make the New Testament the rule of their conduct. Arduous as the task may be under peculiar circumstances, there need be a uniform adherence to the prescribed course in order to win those that are without to embrace the gospel and make its principles their own. An upright, honest, affable, obliging conduct towards all tends to recommend our religious character, and cannot fail at last to invite an examination of the gospel we profess. Acts of kindness, of patience, and of self-denial must win the approbation of all, whilst the prudent exercise of charity compels the receiver to respect the feelings which actuated the giver. More than this, our religion teaches us to forbear with their infirmities, and to endure their calumnies, or even their violent persecutions, with patient submission. One portion of our chart is sufficient to bring the whole of our duties in this respect graphically before us. " But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them

that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you." (Matt. v. 44.) Inasmuch as this comprehensive sentiment was expressed by the great Founder Himself, and was carried out by Him for the encouragement of His followers, let us learn of Him, and thus "walk in wisdom toward them that are without."

Let us notice—

II. The uniform perseverance by which this duty should be carried out, "Redeeming the time."

The word which is here rendered *redeeming* is translated by the Septuagint in Daniel ii. 8, "*delay*" the time, and probably the meaning of the apostle is, that by the wise conduct of Christians towards their heathen neighbours at Colosse, they might delay the time of persecution which then threatened them, and thus extend their opportunities of doing good. To redeem the time in the common acceptation of the term is a most important duty to all classes of individuals. This cannot be done in a natural sense; time once past is irrecoverably lost; we can never recal it; but in a moral sense it may be redeemed by a proper use of the present, and proper provision for the future. The young ought to redeem the time by remembering their Creator in the days of their youth; the healthy and strong ought to redeem the time by considering that sickness and infirmity are not the seasons to prepare for eternity; the weak and the aged ought to redeem the time as they have but a few grains of sand to run, and their eternity depends upon the small portion which remains.

The duty, as urged here upon Christians in respect to others, involves an entire devotedness to doing good. Every opportunity should be embraced and no season should be lost; sacrifices of personal ease and comfort must be made, and nothing of self-interest, of worldly advantage, or of gratifying enjoyment should interfere with the opportunities which may be offered to further the spiritual improvement and eternal happiness of our fellow-men. The Christian who wastes his time in idleness, excess of sleep, useless adorning

of the body, inordinate recreation, vain company, too much worldly business, or indulgence of his own appetites, is below the standard of his high calling; these are robbers of time, and it must be rescued from their grasp.

There are three reasons why we should improve our time for the benefit of others.

1. The glory of God our Saviour is connected with the right employment of time in this respect. "Whatever ye do," says the apostle of the Gentiles, "do all to the glory of God, for ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." The great design of our creation, our preservation, and our redemption is the manifestation of the excellences of His glory, therefore our chief aim in our transactions with men should be its advancement in their salvation; all other considerations should sink into nothingness beneath the responsibility under which we are placed in respect to this great end of our redemption. Happy is the Christian man or woman who, when the eyes are closing in the shades of death, can adopt the satisfactory expressions of our Redeemer, "I have glorified thee upon the earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." Such persons can look back with satisfaction, can look forward with hope, and in the throbs of expiring moments can join with St. Paul, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith, henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me in that day."

2. The present and future happiness of others is involved in the use we make of time for their instruction and conversion. The young must be brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, or the seeds of natural corruption may grow up and destroy all future hope of goodness. The ignorant must be taught the way of salvation, or the god of this world will retain them in the gloom of spiritual unconsciousness, and lead them captive at his will. The thoughtless must be warned of their danger, or they will blindly proceed to their own ruin and perdition. The sick must be

directed to that Physician who is able to save to the uttermost, or they will sink under the weight of hopelessness and despair. The dying must be pointed to the resurrection and the life, or they will fall a prey to the corroding reflections of their past sins, having no prospect but the shades of death and the midnight darkness of the grave. Such results of the neglect of seasonable opportunities should rouse every Christian to the exercise of energetic efforts "in season and out of season" to rescue souls from sin and from hell. Shew them the necessity of repentance towards God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; shew them that the gospel is replete with sources of mercy and happiness; shew them that Christ can save to the uttermost all that come to God through Him; shew them that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin; shew them that God in Him reconciles the world to Himself not imputing their trespasses unto them; shew them that these are the only means to constitute peace, and hope, and happiness and life, "redeeming the time."

8. The time for doing good is short and uncertain. Every emblem of Scripture declares the shortness of life; it is compared to a handbreadth—to a tale that is told—to a ship passing on the sea—to an arrow flying in the air—to an eagle rushing on its prey—to a cloud that vanisheth away. What makes the shortness of time still more serious is, that we know not how short it may be; at the longest it can be but a few years, it may be but a few months, or weeks, or days, or hours. You may go out in health in the morning and return a corpse in the evening. There is no time to waste—no opportunity to be lost; an hour misapplied may involve the perdition of a soul. The individual was placed in your way, you neglected the opportunity, the season glided by, and it can never be recovered. May there not be some in misery whom you might have been the means of saving if you had redeemed the time, walking in wisdom toward them that are without? If you saw a man in the water within the reach of your arm, almost sinking to rise no more, would you not rush at once to his rescue? Knowing that another wave would

drive him beyond reach, would you take time to hesitate in such an emergency? In this case you are called upon to rescue from a sea of eternal ruin—you are to save for eternity; how much greater the necessity for immediate and strenuous action! A celebrated artist being once asked why he exercised so much pains in colouring a certain picture replied, "I paint for posterity." You, my fellow-Christian, paint not only for posterity, but also for eternity; your work will continue when the works of art and of nature shall have fallen into decay. We need therefore no further argument to excite in us a desire to carry into diligent practice the admonition of the text, "Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time."

The Twenty-fourth Sunday after Trinity.

MORNING SERVICE.—Second Lesson : John iii.

Verse 7.—“ *Marvel not that I say unto thee, Ye must be born again.*”

You must have observed that the Scriptures always divide mankind into two classes, the wicked and the righteous, sinners and saints, unbelievers and believers, heirs of hell and heirs of heaven. These are mingled together on earth, but they shall be separated at the day of judgment, when their eternal state will be fixed according to their real character in the present world. What then can be of greater importance to us than to know our true condition? It is also to be observed that although there be the difference which we have just mentioned, still we are all naturally of the same moral stock, that is, sinners, and the heirs of wrath; so that unless a change pass upon us we continue in it, we live in it, we die in it, and are lost for ever. This was the solemn truth which our Lord declared to Nicodemus.

It may be proper before we proceed, to tell you something of this man. In the first verse it is stated “There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.” Probably he was among the number that believed in Christ through the miracles which He performed at the feast of the Passover, of which we read in the preceding chapter. He was no ordinary man, but a man of note and eminence. He was of the sect of the Pharisees, which was the strictest sect in respect to religion and external holiness among the Jews, and which, corrupt as it was, held also the soundest doctrines, as having not only a regard to a Messiah, and to all the writings of the Old Testament, but believed also the existence of angels and spirits, and the resurrection from the dead, which the

Sadducees denied. Notwithstanding all this, they were implacable enemies to Christ, and therefore it is more surprising that such a man should come to Him. He was also a ruler of the Jews. Not a civil magistrate, for the civil power was then in the hands of the Romans, but he was an ecclesiastical ruler—perhaps a member of the Sanhedrim, which consisted of the doctors, the priests, and elders of the people; he was a master of Israel. “The same came to Jesus by night.” He evidently came to Jesus to be instructed in the new and powerful doctrines which He promulgated; but why he came by night we are not informed; it might have been to avoid detection; he was not prepared to suffer persecution for righteousness’ sake, he was not prepared to be cast out of the synagogue, which the Jews threatened to inflict on those who would acknowledge the teaching of that despised Nazarene; he was not prepared to endure the reproaches which might be cast upon him that he, being “a master of Israel,” should go to be taught by a carpenter’s son; he was not prepared to give offence to his brethren of the Sanhedrim, and thus suffer his name to become a bye-word and a reproach among them. Or he came by night under the impression that that season would afford the best opportunity of entering into conversation with our Saviour on subjects of the greatest import. But whatever were his motives he thus came, and having acknowledged Him as a teacher sent from God, the Lord Jesus Christ directly begins to teach him, entering at once into the most important truth that could be taught—the necessity of the new birth, which he asserts in the strongest manner possible. “Verily, verily, I say unto thee,” &c., v. 3. As if He had said, I, who am Truth itself, assure you that no man, considering his fallen and corrupt nature, can understand or enjoy the blessings of that kingdom of grace which I am come to set up, nor can he enter that kingdom of glory to which it leads unless his heart be changed by a power from above. Nicodemus, according to the general notion of his nation, thought, doubtless, that being a descendant of Abraham, and as such claimed a right to all the privileges of God’s

Church, nothing more was necessary to render him a fit subject of the kingdom of heaven ; but Christ assures him that to be a child of Abraham was not sufficient, for he, as others, was born in sin and needed another and different kind of birth to prepare him for heaven. This he could not understand. He marvelled at such expressions. "Nicodemus saith," &c. v. 4. It seemed to him to be a thing so absurd, so impracticable, and so impossible that it could not be for a moment entertained, which shows him to be yet possessed of a carnal mind, and could not discern spiritual things. Upon this the Lord proceeds further to explain the subject. V. 5, 6. I speak not of natural birth, but that which is spiritual. He must be born of water outwardly as a sign of the inward purifying of the Holy Spirit. The water in baptism is an emblem of the thing, but not the real thing itself ; there must be an influence powerful and divine working within to change the heart ; independently of this, external baptism is ineffectual. This is the baptism that renews the mind, that awakens the conscience, that quickens the soul, that prepares the whole man for the kingdom of God. "Marvel not that I say unto thee, Ye must be born again."

The text suggests, first, the nature ; and, secondly, the necessity of the change produced at the new birth.

I. The nature of what we call regeneration.

It is described in the New Testament by various expressions. In the first chapter of this Gospel it is represented as being "born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." In the epistle to Titus it is called the "washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost." In the epistle of St. Peter it is set forth as being made "partakers of the divine nature." In the epistle of St. John as "passing from death unto life." St. Paul calls it "the new man created after God ;" "renewed after the image of him that created him in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness." He also says that "those who were dead in trespasses and sins hath he quickened ;" it is called the

"circumcision of the heart," "created anew in Christ Jesus," "Christ found in us the hope of glory," and various other expressions are used to show the powerful operations which are exercised at the new birth, and the radical change which takes place in the soul.

What is regeneration? It is not the bestowal of new faculties in the mind. Sin did not destroy the faculties of the soul, but its rectitude. Man retains the same faculties after his conversion as he did in his degenerate state. He could choose, love, hate, rejoice, mourn before his change, as he can since. Grace does not give new powers, but new tendencies; it does not destroy the metal, but it effaces the old impression and imprints a new one; it is a new stringing of the instrument that it may produce a different and more harmonious sound. It is not the quickening of some latent principle which lay inactive and concealed in the nature previously, neither is it the supplying of deficiencies in nature; resurrection is not the addition of life, but a thorough restoration. It is something more than the cleansing of the outside of the cup whilst the inside is full of extortion and excess. It is a change—a change of feeling, a change of principle, a change of views, so that old things pass away and all things become new. It is taking away the heart of stone and replacing it with a heart of flesh. We may observe that this change is inward, universal, and takes place at once. It is an inward change, it will indeed produce an outward change if the life were before immoral; but there may be a strict morality in the conduct without a change of heart. Reformation is not regeneration, though often mistaken for it. The spirit of our mind must be renewed. Man looks on the outward appearance, but God regards the heart. We may be as zealous as John, we may be as desirous of dying the death of the righteous as Balaam, we may be as devout as the Pharisees, we may be as penitent as Judas, we may tremble as did Felix, and still not be acceptable with God. He requires sincerity in the inward parts. For this the penitent Psalmist earnestly prayed, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right

spirit within me." Without this there is no true change. The spring and the wheels of a clock must be rectified before the fingers on the dial will point uniformly correct, they may be right twice in twenty-four hours when the time of day corresponds with their position, but not from any motion or rectitude in themselves. So a man may seem by a few actions to be a changed man, but the inward spring being amiss it is all deception. There is a difference between virtue and religion, between morality and holiness. The principle of the new creature is faith; faith, working by love; and this abides, it is a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

2. The change is universal. The whole man is changed. He is a new creature, a complete creature. It is God's work, therefore, perfect in all its parts; it pervades all the recesses of the soul, there is not a single string, not a single faculty left untouched. In the understanding there is light instead of darkness, in the will there is compliance instead of obstinacy, in the conscience there is feeling instead of insensibility, in the affections there is love instead of enmity; the whole soul is made conformable to the image of God's Son.

8. It is an immediate operation, when the man is regenerated he is regenerated at once. There is no medium between being and not being—between life and death—between sinner and saint—between the child of God and the child of Satan. Zaccheus went up the sycamore tree a sinner, he came down a saint; the thief was nailed to the cross a blasphemer and a reprobate, before he expired he was prepared to be with Christ in Paradise. Saul of Tarsus was a violent persecutor when he started for Damascus, but before he reached thither he was a changed man, exclaiming, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Regeneration is not progressive like sanctification, all its subjects are equally regenerated, although they may not be equally holy. The child when born is perfect in parts although not in stature; by regeneration the new man is created perfect in parts, by sanctification he is renewed day by day until he become a "perfect man unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

That the new birth is such a change as has been described, will still more plainly appear by the difference it makes in a person's views and apprehension. He has new thoughts of God—of himself—of the world—of the divine law—of Jesus Christ—of death—of eternity, and of all Divine ordinances. He loves those things which he before hated, and hates those things which he before loved. He has new desires—new fears—new hopes—new joys—and new sorrows. He forms new resolutions, he is employed in new labours, he partakes in new entertainments, and delights in new prospects. He is justly called *a new creation*.

We come to notice—

II. The necessity of regeneration. Observe how very strongly our Lord asserts it in the text. "Ye must be born again." There are many things useful and profitable in religion, but not absolute and essential; the various gifts which Christ has pleased to bestow upon His people are both useful to themselves and profitable to others; they are not nevertheless essential to salvation. This, however, is absolutely necessary, "Except a man be born again he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." He may enter there without talents for the public execution of preaching or singing, he may enter there without attracting the admiration of others by the exercise of those useful gifts with which some are graciously endowed, but "except a man be born again he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Man must be born again.

1. That he may know how to discern spiritual things. It is impossible, brethren, to think rightly of spiritual objects without being regenerated. "The carnal mind cannot comprehend the things of God's Spirit, because they are spiritually discerned." Man's mind can enclose almost all nature within its giant grasp; it can measure a star, it can fathom the ocean, it can dig into the bowels of the earth to procure the history of past ages, it can explore the science of physic and of philosophy, it can call to its aid the electric wire

and convey an idea to the distance of a thousand miles while it yet plays around the fibres of the parent mind ; but thoughts of God and things Divine are too intricate, too noble, too sublime for the exercise of its comprehension until it has been wrought upon by the Spirit of God. There must be an eye to see, there must be an ear to hear, there must be an understanding to know Him that is True, and there must be a spiritual illumination to understand all things. "Ye must be born again."

2. It is necessary that man may perform the duties required of him. Fallen man is ignorant of what is truly good ; he calls evil good, and good evil. Everything acts according to the laws of its own nature. As the tree, so is the fruit ; as the fountain, so is the stream ; as the seed sown, so will be the produce of the land ; no man by sowing barley expects to reap wheat. We are wiser in our generation than to expect to gather grapes off thorns, or figs off thistles, in a physical sense ; it is precisely so in a spiritual sense. If the carnal mind be enmity against God, it cannot be subject to the law of God. The principle of faith, of love, of obedience must be implanted in the soul before a hearty compliance will be rendered to the requirements of God's law. He that is in the flesh cannot please God.

3. It is necessary to prepare the mind to enjoy the privileges of the gospel. The unregenerate person knows nothing of the joys of salvation, he is a stranger to the peace of the gospel, he has no relish for the sincere milk of the word, he cannot delight in prayer, neither can he enjoy communion with God nor with His saints. These things cannot be realized without a renewed heart. "Ye must be born again."

Finally. It is necessary to prepare the soul for glory. Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people : nothing unjust, nothing unholy can enter there. "Without holiness no one shall see the Lord." The King of Heaven is a holy King—the inhabitants of heaven are holy inhabitants—the employments of heaven are holy employments—the songs of heaven are holy songs—the happiness of heaven is holy

happiness—the joy of heaven is holy joy. What can the unregenerate soul do there? He can have no sympathy with the inhabitants nor with the employments of the place. Were he to be taken to heaven he cannot be happy there. To talk of being happy in heaven without holiness is like talking of being well without health, of being saved without salvation. In the absence of a renewed nature a man will be as much out of his element in heaven as a fish on the green meadow, or an ox in the bottom of the sea. Can a man who now hates the godly expect to be happy in the society of saints? Can he who cannot keep three hours of the Sabbath holy bear to keep an eternal Sabbath hereafter? Can he who now delights in profane language imagine that his tongue shall be employed in incessantly praising God? Can he who now hates to think of God love to employ his mind in the eternal contemplation of his excellences? No, brethren, every one at death must go to his own place; heaven is the proper place of the renewed soul, and hell must be the adopted place of the unregenerate and unholy. “Except a man be born again, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.” Ye must be born again. Oh, then, let us not be satisfied until we are persuaded on scriptural and unmistakable grounds that we have experienced this change. We all bear the honourable name of Christians, we have been probably all of us baptized into the Christian faith; but let us not be satisfied with the baptism of water, let us seek also the more effectual baptism of the Holy Spirit. Take not the shadow for the substance. Can water baptism change the heart? has it changed yours? Ask conscience and it will tell you nay; it will tell you “old things are *not* passed away; all things are *not* become new.”

“Not all the outward forms on earth,
 Nor rites that God has given,
 Nor will of man, nor blood, nor birth,
 Can raise a soul to heaven.
 The sovereign will of God alone
 Creates us heirs of grace,
 Born in the image of His Son
 A new, peculiar race.”

The Twenty-fourth Sunday after Trinity.

EVENING SERVICE.—First Lesson : Proverbs xiv.

Verse 10.—“ *The heart knoweth his own bitterness.*”

GREAT and diversified are the emotions of the human mind. It is never at rest, but like a surging ocean it is incessantly agitated by one or the other of the feelings to which it is subject. Those feelings vary in nature according to circumstances, alternating between joy and sorrow, pleasure and pain, happiness and misery, hope and fear, satisfaction and disappointment, assurance and doubt, as the case may be. They also vary in magnitude, in proportion to the cause which generates them ; as the waves undulate on the surface according to the surges underneath, or the current above, so the emotions of the mind are regulated by the surrounding circumstances that produce them. God has so wisely ordered in His providence that no feelings should be unmixed in the present world. In this imperfect state of our nature a combination of feeling is absolute to modulate our dispositions and actions. Unmixed joy and happiness would so elevate us above the level of our real position that we should soon forget both our dependence upon God and our duty towards our fellow-men. Unmixed sorrow and misery would so depress the spirits that we should be rendered incapable of either attending to the duties of time or of preparing for the realities of eternity ; therefore, our cup is composed of contrary ingredients to preserve us in that temper best adapted to our state of probation.

In this verse Solomon speaks of both the sorrow and the joy of the heart, which are represented to be so deep and inconceivable to others that each individual is regarded the

custodian of his own emotions, whilst none else can share in the realization of his feelings. We have fixed upon the darkest portion for our present subject, as it is necessary to understand the nature of this before we can learn to appreciate the soothing tendency of the other. "The heart knoweth his own bitterness."

We shall then regard, first, the source whence arises the bitterness of the heart; and, secondly, the secrecy of that bitterness.

I. The source whence arises the bitterness of the heart.

We may not be always able to account for the sorrow which arises in the mind, we sometimes feel cast down and dejected, but cannot assign a reason for it; there is no real cause of which we know for such depression, still, with our utmost effort, we cannot shake it off. But, generally, bitterness of heart arises from one or the other of three sources, either from the dispensations of Providence, or from the conduct of others, or from our own want of prudence and integrity.

1. Bitterness of heart, or sorrow, arises from the dispensations of Providence. Whenever it comes from thence it is intended for the salutary correction and improvement of the soul. Those corrections appear in different forms, as the wisdom of God may deem best for our good. Sometimes they come in the form of bereavement. The best member of the family is snatched away by death, perhaps the husband and father is taken from the wife and children; who can tell the anguish of that widowed mother, not only at the loss of a dear partner and loving friend, but also at the prospect of rearing a numerous family when the chief natural prop of dependence has been withdrawn. In other cases the mother is removed, or the beloved child dies when it is blooming into life, or the brother, or sister, or friend, in whom probably the affections were too much engrossed, has been called to go the way of all the earth, and left you to trudge the rugged path of life alone. At other times bodily affliction is the cause of bitter grief; you, or those dear to you, have suffered acute and

durable pains, the burden seems almost too heavy to be borne. You feel the bitterness, but you are taught to "bear the rod and who hath appointed it." The reverse of fortune, the loss of property, misfortune in business, and a distressing reduction from a state of comparative ease and affluence to a state of abject poverty and pinching want, are providential sources from whence flows bitterness of heart. These are portioned more or less to every member of the human family. There is none exempt. They may not be proportioned to every one alike; in some instances they come like overwhelming inundations depriving the mind of reason, and threatening to bury the soul in the gulph of despondency; whilst in other instances they fall in lighter showers, afflictive indeed, but so tempered as to bend the mind in submissive resignation under the stroke of a Father's hand. In all cases they are intended to humble us under the mighty hand of God, to divest us of self-reliance, to embitter creature comforts to us, and to place our affections on things more substantial and enduring than things of earth. Man proposes, God disposes; man forms his plans and hopes for success, God frustrates them and disappointment follows.

2. Bitterness of heart arises from the conduct of others. We are in a great measure constituted the custodians of each other's happiness; we have it in our power to inflict pain, or to promote pleasure in the bosoms of others. It is astonishing to what an extent misery may be caused by one evilly disposed person to his fellow-man. It is not necessary that a person should be robbed of his property, dispossessed of his rights, or deprived of his liberty, to inflict a wound in his heart; the poisoned arrows of bitter words, the tongue of slander, which setteth on fire the course of nature, the misrepresentation of character, or the false colouring of facts, the insinuating whisper, or the scornful look, are as iron entering the soul. The bite of an adder, or the fangs of a scorpion, could not have produced equal pain; the poison has been lodged within, and no power of man can entirely extract it. The conduct of children is often the source of great sorrow

to the parents ; as in the case of Jacob, many " grey hairs go down with sorrow to the grave," or, as in the case of David, many go up to the chamber and weep in consequence of their children's misconduct. But—

8. The heart's greatest bitterness is the result of its own imprudence and crimes. If a general rushes into action without calculating his chances of success and arranging his forces to the best advantage, he is likely to smart for it. If a person enters into speculations without first sitting down to count the cost, the smart may not be less acute, although perhaps not so widely spread in its consequences. One imprudent act either in trade or in domestic arrangement often causes a life of bitterness. There is no bitterness, however, like that consequent upon personal sin. "A wounded spirit, who can bear?" especially if that wound has been pierced by the arrow of crime. There is no pain so insupportable as the guilt of an awakened conscience. There may be found some remedy to ease other sufferings both of body and mind. A man may have suffered afflictions, and losses, and bereavements, but time and favourable changes have worn away the sharpness of the trial ; but neither length of time nor distance of place, nor prosperity of circumstances can wear off the pangs of guilt. Some have tried penance, others have tried alms-giving, and many have tried reformation of character ; all have been of no avail, the sting still remained. Nothing, except the blood of Jesus Christ, which cleanseth from all sin, can take away the bitterness of guilt from the heart. David, being comforted himself, was able to comfort Bathsheba his wife for the death of their child, but the sword never departed from his house in consequence of the sin which he had committed.

II. The bitterness of every heart is known only to itself. "The heart knoweth his own bitterness."

When we speak of the secrecy of our inward feelings, we except Him to whom all things are exposed, and from whom no secrets are hid ; from each other the intensity of our

feelings is concealed ; no one can fully participate either in our joy or our sorrow. Others may share our happiness, or sympathize with us in our troubles ; and it is a great addition to the one, as it is a great relief from the other to pour our pleasure or our pain into the ear and heart of a sympathizing friend, but it is not in nature that any one but Christ can know and partake of them to the full extent.

From this fact there are two things perceptible. First, the inadequacy of human penetration ; and secondly, the inadequacy of human language.

1. Our penetration is inadequate to enter fully into each other's real feelings. We look upon the outward appearance, and are often mistaken in the true state of things. Our knowledge is partial, hence we arrive at wrong conclusions. This is true respecting things generally ; there are parts in nature which we are incapable of comprehending, because we can only scan the surface, and are unable to examine the whole ingredients of which they are composed, and the peculiar laws by which they are regulated. There are circumstances in Providence, the real object and tendency of which we cannot possibly divine. As the dreams of Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar were inexplicable to the magicians of Egypt and Babylon, so are the dispensations of God's Providence to us. When God moves in a mysterious way, raising up one, and bringing down another, especially when those dispensations retard our personal prosperity and mar our present happiness, we conclude like Jacob that all these things are against us, we write bitter things against God and ourselves, and we may be tempted to charge Him with partiality and injustice in His dealings with us. Our ignorance is a great barrier to our confidence. Could we exercise a little more patience, calculating upon our imperfect knowledge, and placing more implicit trust upon the rectitude of His government, we should feel that His arrangements are the very best for the exigencies of our case. The same want of penetration may be regarded in respect to others' real feelings. The rich we call happy, the poor we regard as

miserable. When we see persons adorned in finery, living in decorated mansions, driving in rich equipages with an imposing retinue of attendants, we conclude at once, happiness dwells there; when we observe persons clothed in rags, living in huts, and labouring incessantly for their daily bread, we think 'wretchedness must be there.' The gay and the frivolous we esteem free from trouble, the serious and the pensive we regard full of anxiety and sorrow. We envy the rich, and commiserate the poor, from the notion that the one must be happy in the possession of wealth, and the other must be wretched under the pressure of poverty; whereas we know but little of the amount of inward grief which may roll along in a carriage of state, or the amount of inward satisfaction which may trudge along barefooted. How true the adage reduced to verse!

"If every man's internal care
Were written on his brow;
How many would our pity share,
Who raise our envy now."

Could we enter with the most unconcerned and merry in outward appearance into their closets, we should witness the bitterness of sorrow heaving the heart, and bathing the cheeks with tears. It is said of a certain celebrated tragedian, that he once consulted an eminent physician for depression of spirits. The prescription given him was "go and witness — act." He replied, "I am the very man; little do you know, doctor, the real feelings of my heart; I appear to be happy, but am one of the most wretched men in the world; whilst I make others laugh, I weep inwardly myself in bitter grief." "The heart knoweth his own bitterness."

2. Human language is inadequate to describe the real feelings of the heart. Even when we wish to express our sorrows we cannot find words to set them forth; they are deeper than tongue can declare, therefore they are locked up within the heart concealed from all other human ken.

Sometimes we can join with Jeremiah, "Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow," still that sorrow cannot be conceived by others, as we are unable to convey its pungency in words.

Of all human bitterness, that of the awakened sinner may be regarded the most indescribable. The sorrows arising from the trial and disappointments of this world may be deep, but that arising from a real conviction of the purity of God's law, the extreme corruption of our own heart, and the exceeding evil of sin is still deeper. The law pronounces the sentence of eternal condemnation upon the poor soul; sin prevails against him, he strives, but he cannot conquer it; the disparity between God, as infinitely holy, and himself as inconceivably sinful, distresses him beyond description. He would seek unto God and sue for pardon—mercy is his pursuit, his plea, and his only encouragement—he attempts to call upon the Lord, but corruption, unbelief, and a variety of discouragements keep him back—plunge him into the overwhelming floods of poignant grief and heartrending anguish. Even when the awakened sinner becomes a believer, and is supported by the comforts of the gospel, there is not a day nor an hour but that sin is felt painfully inimical to his comforts, and most hostile to the work of God in the heart. Hence the contention between flesh and spirit, and hence the bitter complaint—"O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

But we would not conclude without referring to one in whose heart all the bitterness of the world was concentrated. One "who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despised the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." Bitterness of heart was His uniform lot in life, and at some important seasons His soul was exceedingly sorrowful even unto death. To such an inconceivable extent was the sorrow of His soul at one time that His human nature appeared to shudder and even to recoil when the cup of heavenly indignation was presented to Him. Yet that

He might not shrink from the duty which He undertook, He cries, "Nevertheless not my will, but thine be done." Let us then look unto Jesus, and draw comfort by a comparison of His bitterness with our own, then, by reflecting upon His greater trials, we may be encouraged to bear ours with patience and resignation.

The Twenty-fifth Sunday after Trinity.

MORNING SERVICE.—A Good Name : Prov. xxii.

Verse 1.—“ *A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches.*”

THE choice between the alternative of character and wealth is a criterion by which the real principle of the mind may be fairly tried. Which think you is the least of two evils, the ruin of fortune or the ruin of a good name? Happy is the man who can sit down amidst the wreck of his property, his prospects, and his hopes; who can wipe his tears, and nobly rising in the consciousness of his integrity above his misfortunes can say in the words of a king of France, “All is lost but my honour.” With this consciousness such a man is less—far less to be pitied than the man who has risen to wealth upon the ruin of his reputation. No man can be regarded poor who is rich in whatever things are lovely and of good report; while on the other hand neither wealth, nor learning, nor science can dignify a man without character. A good name is the best capital with which to *begin* life, it affords the most reasonable hope of success in *passing through* life, and it will yield the sweetest reflections at the *close* of life. Solomon must have been correct in his estimation of the value of a good name. “He who spoke 3,000 proverbs, whose songs were 1,005, who spake of trees from the cedar that is in Lebanon to the hyssop that springeth out of the wall, and spake also of beasts, and of fowls, and of creeping things, and of fishes,” knew well how to calculate the worth of human character. He asked wisdom and knowledge of God; in addition He gave him riches and honour such as none of the

kings possessed who had been before him, and such as none should possess who were to come after him. All those he tried, and found to his cost that they were "vanity and vexation of spirit." In the midst of splendour and prosperity he balanced the whole which this world could afford with the value of true wisdom, and came to the rational conclusion that wisdom or religion was the principal thing. Hence it follows that a good name founded on religious principles is rather to be chosen than great riches.

My object at present is to impress upon you the importance of attaining to the possession of a good name, or in other words to a truly moral and religious character.

You may ask, What is character? It is not wealth, it is not station, it is not fame, it is not talent; all these may be acquired without a vestige of a good name. Character is the prevailing and habitual qualities or dispositions of a person's mind or conduct. A mere occasional act, however splendid an instance of good conduct it may be, does not constitute character, even though it may be repeated at long intervals. Acts are sometimes done by men so unlike their prevailing dispositions that we are astonished at them as phenomena which exceedingly perplex us when we make inquiry into their cause. Even good men, under the power of temptation, do things occasionally which are very unlike themselves and contrary to their character. Often, single acts of *bad* men have excelled in magnitude and splendour any of the single acts of *good* men; but the former were only an extraordinary effort of virtue which exhausted at once all the strength of the actor, whilst the latter were the continued and natural action of a well grounded principle. The one was the rare but imposing splendour of a comet or a meteor which appears but for a little while, and then vanishes away; whilst the other is the steady, continuous, and directing, though it may be the less imposing light of the polar star. General uniformity, consistency, and perseverance in good conduct are then essential to character.

Three things ought to be kept constantly in view when

forming a good name. First, a strong foundation ; secondly, a good construction ; and thirdly, a durable object.

I. A strong foundation. The foundation of a building is laid in the earth, deep and firm. There is much labour bestowed in digging and throwing out the soil and forming a suitable trench ready to receive the materials which are to sustain the weight of the fabric. Then there is much material lodged concealed out of sight that is totally forgotten by the disinterested observers of the structure. Who, for instance, in passing St. Paul's Cathedral and admiring its stately pillars and massive body, dreams of the quantity of stone and concrete on which the whole rests, and without which the building would soon be a heap of ruins ? Yet, there is the foundation vast and deep, though buried, hidden, and nearly forgotten. So must it be with a good name ; the foundation must be laid in the mind, and heart, and conscience. There must be a digging into the soul—a throwing out of much that is in the way of what is to be introduced—a making room for much material to be laid there, and a careful deposit of a suitable substratum. Something strong—something broad—something durable must be hidden in the soul. A lofty superstructure of character can no more be raised which shall be permanent without this, than a towering building can be permanent that is erected on the surface of the earth, and not beneath it.

We ought then to inquire, What should be the materials which can form a suitable foundation of character ? They are not science, nor literature, nor arts ; these may do for the intellectual, but not for the moral character ; moral character cannot rest on philosophy, or astronomy, or geology, or chemistry, or on any other science, more than a pyramid or a castle can rest on a foundation of jewellery or diamonds. The foundation must be firm moral principles implanted in the soul. They are to be not mere opinions, but convictions ; not speculative theories on morals, but practical conclusions ; not sentiments floating in the judgment, but principles rooted

in the heart. They consist in correct views of God, of ourselves, and of the way of salvation. God is to be regarded as the Supreme Governor of all things ; recommending Himself to our judgment by the mysteriousness of His essence, loftiness of His attributes, and the beauty of His character. We must look upon ourselves as depraved and corrupt, too unworthy to be admitted into the favour of one so great and holy, and thus feeling the necessity of repentance and prayer. The provisions made in the scheme of man's redemption by Christ, which are applied to the renovation of the soul through the agency of the Holy Spirit; are to be regarded as the only means of our acceptance. These and such as these are the mighty stones which being dug from the quarry of the Bible, and laid in the heart by the power of a living faith, constitute the foundation of that character which is to exhibit its beautiful proportions on earth, which is to rise to heaven, and which is to endure throughout eternity. These are the principles which must be laid in the depth of the human soul by an intelligent apprehension of their nature, a deep conviction of their truth, and an impressive sense of their importance. To attempt to form a character without such principles is like erecting a building without a foundation.

We remark—

II. That character like a building is not all foundation, there is also a superstructure. If principles therefore are the basis, virtues are the edifice, or in other words *moral truth* developed in *moral action*.

The virtues which constitute the elements of every well formed character are prominently brought before us in the Word of God. They are summed up by the Apostle Paul in one passage when writing to the Galatians, and are designated by him the fruits of the Spirit. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance ; against such there is no law." These are worked out with a prudence, an integrity, and a self-denial which no storm of adversity can bend, and no sunshine of

prosperity can relax, pursuing what is right towards God and man, even to bonds, imprisonment, and death. They preserve a man from being a slave to his appetites and passions, and make him master of himself. They are the temper of angels—the law of heaven—the truest, the brightest, the only resemblance of God.

Brethren, if you would have a good name, which is rather to be chosen than great riches, let me remind you that you must be under God your own builders. No man can do it for you. Another man may build your house, but cannot build your character. God has graciously condescended to become your Architect, He has laid down a perfect rule in His Word for your guidance, all the specifications are minutely given; others by their counsel and direction may assist you, but no assistance can dispense with your labour. You may possibly have property left you, and you may become rich without your own efforts; but no one can bequeath character to you; your own industry alone can obtain it.

It is also of consequence to know that as no other can construct character for us, so neither will it come of itself, or by chance; it must be the result of design and effort. You may as rationally expect that a palace or temple would rise by a fortuitous concourse of atoms as that good habits will be formed by a contingent concurrence of actions or events. No, there must be a plan laid, a purpose formed, a rule observed, and an end invariably sought. A bad character may be formed almost without design; yield to the impulse of your evil propensities and to the force of external temptation, and your character is formed just as weeds and brambles will grow in the wilderness without cultivation, while delicate garden flowers and hot-house plants require much care and labour bestowed upon them. Again, it often happens that a single occurrence is the hinge on which a man's character for life may turn, therefore those occurrences in which opportunities offer ought not to be neglected. One violent temptation, according as it is successfully resisted or slavishly complied with, may have the effect of a fixed determination for

good or evil. There is a striking instance given by Foster in his essay on "Decision of Character," of a man who had wasted his paternal estate by his profligacy, and upon surveying the lost property from a neighbouring hill, came to the determination of recovering it again. The resolution being formed, he immediately began to put it into execution, and after persevering efforts and self-denial he succeeded to recover the whole.

Finally. To form a good name it is of the greatest advantage to be conversant with the best models, whether living or biographical. Painters, sculptors, or architects, who would excel in their respective professions, study the productions of the best masters, and think nothing of the expense and labour of a journey to Rome, or Athens, or Florence, to drink in the inspirations produced by a contemplation of the works of Raphael, and Rubens, and Phidias, and Michael Angelo. On a mind athirst for moral excellency a similar effect is produced by the perusal of the lives of men distinguished for their piety and virtue. Associate also with those of your age who hold fast their integrity, and are patterns of every excellency: those who are tried with your trials and are tempted with your temptations, and yet are virtuous, and diligent, and honest in the midst of wicked and gainsaying people. "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise."

III. There is one object to be kept in view. The character which we form here is eternal in its duration; nothing in connection with the subject can be more momentous or more sublime than this. Remember, brethren, you are now modelling yourselves for eternity; certainly then we may fully entertain the sentiment of Solomon in the text, "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches." The immortality of the soul and a future state of rewards and punishments are, I trust, believed and felt by every one present. Eternity! what a sublime idea! who can measure its length? it is an endless duration of existence which mocks the power of arithmetic to calculate, and of human or angelic mind to grasp. The idea of its height, and depth, and length, and

breadth cannot find room to expand but in the mind of Him who is from everlasting to everlasting. Future eternity belongs to man, and is the measure of his existence. What are we? We are not those fading shadows and dying creatures that we appear to be. There is upon every one of us the stamp of immortality, there is a spirit in our possession which shall fly beyond the bounds of space and time.

"The stars shall fade away, the sun himself
Grow dim with age, and nature sink in years ;
But thou shalt flourish in immortal youth
Unhurt, amidst the war of elements,
The wreck of matter, and the crush of worlds."

The poet merely echoes the language of that volume which abolishes death and brings life and immortality to light: language which raises us above the dreams of imagination and the speculations of philosophy, and places us among the realities of truth, the objects of faith, and the anticipation of hope.

If, then, man is to exist through eternity, through eternity there must be some character. No one can be negative there any more than here. We should entertain a presumption of this, if we only reason from analogy. Truly death separates two states, and some think it will make a considerable and radical change in the condition of the soul. But why? Death is solely a physical change, operating only as far as we know upon the material part of our nature. It is merely the pulling down of the walls of the prison to let the captive escape. *Disease* of itself effects no moral change, and why should death? death does no more than complete the change which disease commenced, it cannot touch the soul: the moral consciousness remains in continuous and unchanged existence. Not only do the same faculties continue, but also the same moral qualities.

What reason renders probable, revelation renders certain. Every part of the sacred volume represents this world as a state of discipline and probation for the next, as bearing the same relation to a future world as boyhood and youth do to

manhood. God has sent us here to acquire an eternal moral character. He gives us an opportunity to do so, and we in reality do it. Time decides for eternity: the probation ends with life, and death sets the seal not only on destiny but on character. From that moment the good are good, and the bad are bad for ever. All then pass under the sentence: "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still."

In conclusion, let me refer you to one perfect and infallible model by which to form a character. Looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith, read His biography as given by the evangelists; see at once His meekness and His firmness; see at once His humility and His resolution. He resisted with the most heroic courage and determination all the temptations of Satan, but He bore without resentment all the calumnies and reproaches of His enemies. He knew no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth, yet He endured with the most perfect resignation all the sufferings connected with sin, and all the trials of the present life. If, then, you would form a character worthy of Christians—if you would grow in favour with God and man—if you would possess a good name that is rather to be chosen than great riches—follow Jesus.

The Twenty-fifth Sunday after Trinity.

EVENING SERVICE.—His own place: Acts i.

Verse 25.—“ *That he might go to his own place.*”

THIS was originally spoken of Judas Iscariot, the betrayer of our Lord. The character of Judas is so notorious that we need not now enter minutely into his history. The first account recorded of him in Scripture is that he was chosen by our Saviour to be one of His twelve disciples. He commissioned him to go forth with the other eleven to preach the Gospel to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. There is no evidence whatever that his outward conduct, or his preaching, or his miracles, were in any way inferior to those of his brethren; which we may regard as a fact proving how far a person may go in the discharge of religious duties, and in the cultivation of external morals, without experiencing a change of heart, or possessing the genuineness of a sincere Christian. Jesus knew the state of his mind from the beginning, and doubtless His object in selecting him to be one of His followers was to accomplish the Divine counsels, and to fulfil Divine prophecies. His true character, however, was not made known to men until a short time before the last scenes of his Master's career upon earth. It was six days before the Passover that Christ came to Bethany and supped in the house of Simon the leper. Among the guests was Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead, whose sisters were also present. After supper Mary anointed His feet with ointment, and wiped them with her hair. Here Judas complained of the waste, and said, “Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence and given to the poor?” The poor were a mere cloak for his covetousness. “This he said,” St. John tells us, “not that he cared

for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein." Christ, we find, justified Mary's conduct, and it is thought that being provoked at this, he at once resolved to betray Him. He agreed to deliver Him into the hands of the chief priests and elders of the people for thirty pieces of silver, or 3*l.* 8*s.* 5*d.* of our money, which was about the price of a slave in those days.

On the subject of the death of Judas there seems to be a great diversity of opinion among divines. Some, following the bare letter of the text, suppose that he actually hanged himself, and the rope breaking, he fell and burst by the fall. It is supposed by others that being filled with horror and despair, he went to the top of the house, or some other eminence, and threw himself down, and, thus falling headlong, his body was rent asunder. Others think that he died, or was suffocated through excessive grief, and that thus the term used here and in the Gospel are to be understood. The original word, which is here translated *hanged himself*, is the same as that employed of the swine in the country of the Gadarenes where our Saviour permitted the devils to enter into them. They rushed headlong into the sea and were choked, or suffocated. So here, when Judas saw that his master was actually in the hands of his enemies, he was seized with such violent grief as occasioned a rupture which ended in his suffocation and death. Others suppose that the language is altogether figurative. Judas having been highly exalted in being made a disciple, and even the purse-bearer to his Lord and fellow-disciples, by his treason forfeited that honour, and is represented as falling from a state of the highest dignity into the lowest state of degradation and infamy, and then dying through excessive grief. Let each adopt the opinion he may think most consistent with Holy writ. Some apologize for the conduct of Judas, thinking for various reasons that he was not so bad a man as he is represented to be, and Dr. Adam Clarke concludes that he was not placed beyond the pale of Divine mercy no more than were the Jews who both betrayed and murdered that *Just One*. This must be an undecided question. We

know that if he had applied to that innocent blood which he betrayed, it was sufficiently efficacious to take away even *his sin*, deep a dye as it was. But there is a passage in St. Matthew which renders his case, if not desperate, at least extremely doubtful. "The Son of man goeth as it is written of him ; but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed ; it had been good for that man if he had not been born ;" and the passage which we have chosen for the text seems to imply that Judas having died, went to the place appointed for the wicked, where they receive a full recompense for all their evil deeds. We must, however, leave him in the hands of a righteous Judge, who administers perfect justice to all hereafter.

There are two things suggested in the text which are worthy of our consideration. First, that at death every man's character shall be reduced to its simplest element. Secondly, that this element in every man's character is formed in this world, so that when he dies he goes to his own place.

I. That at death every man's character shall be reduced to its simplest element. Every man's character in this life is a compound. This may appear a singular expression ; it is, nevertheless, true. What may be said of things generally, may be said of each person individually. In this world there are contending elements at work ; it is so in nature ; it is so in society. We find a mixture of good and evil, of light and darkness, of pleasure and pain, of joy and sorrow, of love and hatred. The grain and the tares grow together in the same field until the harvest ; the wheat and the chaff are mingled in the same thrashing floor. There may be in many instances a preponderance of evil, but that evil is counteracted by the elements of good, or it would become unbearable. It is the case with each individual ; there is none so vicious but there may be traced some traits of goodness in his character, and there is none so virtuous but there may be perceived some fault in his conduct. "In many things we all offend ;" never did a man live (except the man Christ Jesus) whose life was

one uniform course of goodness. But in the world to come it will be different ; there all will be good, or all will be evil. Whatever ingredients may compose the character of a wicked man here, they will all be reduced to one principle hereafter, and that principle for want of a more comprehensive term may be called *hatred*—perfect, unremitting, unrelenting, inconceivable hatred. This, brethren, is the predominant feeling in hell, all other feelings may be regarded as emanating from this. There will be implacable enmity against God without being able to injure Him. Even *here* the apostle tells us, “the carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God ;” here, however, the feeling may be in a measure curbed, either from shame or from fear of offending those who are better disposed. *There* all restraint will be cast off, and this worst of feelings exercised in its full force. Perhaps also the feeling will be continually increased by the fact that God on His part will pour out His wrath without mixture into the condemned soul.

There will be everlasting hatred towards the redeemed without being ever able to gratify it. From the parable of Lazarus and the rich man we are justified in concluding that the sinners in misery shall have a full view of the saints in glory, although for ever deprived of enjoying the same happiness ; this will tend to aggravate their suffering, will constantly excite their envy, and will add to the fervour of their hatred.

This passion will be felt in its most violent form by the lost towards each other. There will be no natural affection, no sympathy, no condolence with each other’s deplorable condition, but confusion, strife, accusations, recriminations, and insults will tend to swell the cup of their misery. Nothing upon earth can be introduced to illustrate to its full extent the confusion which must pervade that unhappy domain. The scenes on a field of battle are revolting in the highest degree to the feelings of humanity. A quarrelsome family is one of the strongest evidences of the depravity of our nature. But perhaps the scenes at a brothel would come nearest to represent in a faint light the awful scenes of the place of

torment; the confusion, the threats, the wrinkled brow, the clenched fist, the oaths, the imprecations, all of which are indexes of the violent passions which rage within the bosom, give us some idea of the wretchedness of those who are doomed to endure such scenes for ever.

The feeling will be carried to a still further extent, and each individual will hate himself. There will be no self-respect, but self-accusation and remorse, which will sink the soul to the depth of guilt and despair throughout eternity. This then will be the simple element into which the character of the wicked shall be reduced at death.

2. The character of the good man also will consist of one principle, and that principle is love. Heaven will be the perfecting of what began upon earth. According to the teaching of Christ and His apostles, the whole sum and substance of genuine religion here, is love—love to God and love to man; for “love is the fulfilling of the law.” Religion on earth is love in the bud: heaven is love in the fully-blown rose, where all its beauty and fragrance shall be developed. On earth we need various graces that will be dispensed with in heaven. Here we need repentance, and faith, and hope, all of which emanate from this one principle of love: it is the essence of religion which must be possessed by every believer. Here the prince and the peasant, the philosopher and the ignorant, must meet. Men’s notions may differ materially in circumstantialia according to their taste and cultivation; but when we come to the abstract principle of religion there can be but one. For instance, the mind of Sir Isaac Newton when contemplating the dimensions of a star, or the distance of a planet, the laws of metaphysics, or the force of gravitation, soared far above the mind of the shepherd of Salisbury Plain, who merely contemplated the treatment of his flock or the comforts of his family; but on the subject of religion their minds were brought to the same level. Without love in his soul, Sir Isaac Newton could no more be a Christian than the shepherd of Salisbury Plain. Here man is brought to assimilate to his Maker. St.

John says that "God is love:" not that love forms an attribute of Deity, or is an ingredient of His character; but He is all love. His essence is love: all other attributes are mere branches of this. Is He just? It is because He loves rectitude. Is He holy? It is because He loves purity. Is He gracious and merciful? It is because He is made up of love. Religion is a part of the Divine nature implanted in the heart by God's own Spirit. Heaven then will be the same element expanded: the same principle carried out to its full extent. It will be all love: every action will be love: every modulation will be love: every strain will be love: the burden of every song will be love; and all the happiness, and joy, and pleasures, and glory, will consist in the fact that the simple element of love only will pervade every sainted spirit in the heavenly land.

We observe:

II. That this simple element, good or bad in every man's character, is formed in this world, so that when he dies he goes to his own place. On the one hand we have what the apostle calls the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction, and on the other we have the vessels of mercy prepared for glory. We are placed here to prepare for eternity. Let us not think, brethren, that our actions, and words, and thoughts fall to the ground on the spot without any further results: each action, each word, each thought, carries with it a train that will accompany us into another world. Every person has a character of some kind or the other, either good or bad. If bad, it has been formed by himself with the assistance of Satan's temptations; if good, it has been formed by himself with the aid of God's grace. No man lives without a character, and no man dies without a character. We judge of persons' character from the habitual tendency of their actions. As we stated in the morning, one act does not form a character. For instance, an habitual drunkard may be sober occasionally, but we would not regard him a sober man for all that. A miser may give a handsome dona-

tion to the cause of charity once in his life, still we would not call him a *liberal* man. Likewise a sober man may fall into temptation and be led astray, but that one act would not constitute him a drunkard. It is a person's general conduct that forms his character. But then, a man's conduct may be changed, and consequently, his character regarded in a different light. The drunkard may become sober, the adulterer may become chaste, the sabbathbreaker may be brought to keep holy the Sabbath-day; and, thank God, we have many instances of such changes. Then comes the question, if a man spend forty, fifty, or sixty years in forming the character of a rebel against God, and changes a short time before his death, what evidences have we of the salvation of that man? For an answer, let us turn to *Ezekiel xxxiii.* 14, 16: "Again, when I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die: if he turn from his sin, and do that which is lawful and right; if the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die. None of his sin that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him: he hath done that which is lawful and right; he shall surely live." Here we are taught the gracious nature of our God, who mercifully confines Himself to the character at the close of life, and leaves us a hope that if we become penitent before we die, He will pardon our past transgressions, and remember our iniquities no more. But then, let us not depend upon this, and on the strength of it defer the discharge of our religious duties, and the application of our minds to the seeking of mercy to the last. For though we cannot limit God's goodness; and though we have witnessed many happy instances of persons' conversion on a death-bed, still, what can we say of those whose life is snapped away in an instant by what we call accident, or those who are seized with a raging fever, and rendered incapable for thought, or those who die in a state of sudden stupor? Oh, brethren, it is venturing too much; it is venturing a soul of infinite value upon an uncertainty. The chances are against us; for generally as men

live they die. According to the general tenor of God's word, we find that heaven and hell are prepared places for prepared people. Hear the words of our Saviour Himself. "And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, and the goats on his left," &c. (Matthew xxv. 23, 34, 41.) If heaven be prepared for us, we must be prepared for heaven. A corrupt soul cannot enter there, and if it did, it would not fit there: it is not its *own place*; and a sanctified soul cannot enter hell for the same reasons.

In conclusion, we see the necessity of losing no time in preparing for eternity. There is no change after death: in the condition that death finds us we shall be for ever. If just, just still: if unholy, unholy still. The best criterion by which we may know a man's condition in death is to know how he lived. If he live righteously and godly in the life which now is, you may rest assured that he will die happily. He must "go to his own place." We frequently put up the petition of Balaam, and say, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my latter end be like unto his." Let us rather say, Let me live the life of the righteous, and God will take care of our death, for we are "persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come; nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

The Twenty-sixth Sunday after Trinity.

MORNING SERVICE.—The Works of Christ and the Believer.
John xiv.

Verse 12.—“ *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.*”

OUR Saviour's works upon earth consisted of two kinds. The one kind He performed as Mediator, the other He performed as man. In His work as Mediator He was exclusive, none could assist, nor imitate Him; they comprised all that He came to accomplish in working out the schemes of redemption, by which God and man can be reconciled, by which alone God can be glorified in the salvation of a rebellious world. In His works as man He laid down a perfect rule of morality for the guidance of all His followers, so that every believer of whatever station may look to Him as his patron, and imitate Him as his great exemplar.

To these works He directs the attention of the disciples in the text, showing both the duty and the privilege of those who acknowledged and trusted in Him. Three enquiries suggest themselves to the mind in reading this passage of scripture. First, What works are common to Christ and the believer? secondly, In what do the works of the believer excel His? and, thirdly, For what reasons do they excel.

I. The works which are common to Christ and the believer. “ *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth in me, the works that I do shall he do also.*”

Observe, there is a qualification necessary, without which

no one can rightly imitate Christ. "He that believeth in me." Without faith it is impossible to please God. It is faith that gives the power and energy which is necessary to please God in imitation of the example of Christ. Such a power does not compel, but attract the mind to God, just as the needle is attracted to the loadstone. The force of attraction is not in the needle but in the loadstone, still the needle must be composed of the right material, common iron, or even silver or gold would not reciprocate the force, nothing except genuine steel can be thus acted upon. The spiritual attractive power is in God, but nothing except genuine faith can qualify the believer to imitate the works of Christ as man.

Those works consisted—

1. In obedience to the will of God. He came to do the will of the Father; in compliance with that object He rendered perfect obedience to every command of the Divine law. If we would be His followers we must render the like obedience, not in the same perfection, but from the same principle, which is that of love to God, and a desire to please Him. He being without sin was not subject to the deviations to which our sinful nature is susceptible, consequently a perfect imitation is above the mark to which we can hope to attain, still, in all we do we must aim at no lower standard than His example.

2. They were works of teaching. "Never man spake like this man." Doctrines and precepts had been previously taught to the world. Philosophers and moralists had advanced theories of considerable worth for the guidance of human conduct, many of which, however, being founded on mere conjecture without sufficient data, tended to distract rather than satisfy the mind. Moses and the prophets, being aided by Divine revelation, declared the will of God as received in visions and dreams, in signs and symbols, which were, nevertheless inadequate for the wants of mankind. Christ, on His part, came from the bosom of the Father, revealed the whole of God's character, the whole of man's duty, and the whole of the realities of the present and future world. These doctrines He committed to the charge of His followers, so that as they were taught of Him, they might teach others.

3. They were works of charity. He "went about doing good." All His actions, whether private or public, had a tendency to relieve the necessities of the sick, the bereaved, the poor, and the needy; all of which He did that we may go and do likewise.

4. They were works of miracles. To these, I believe, He refers chiefly in the text. "The works that I do shall ye do also." What mostly attracted the attention and excited the admiration of the people in respect to Christ were the miracles which He wrought. Not that those miracles were to them a proof of His Divine nature, for they knew that miracles of equal magnitude had been wrought by Moses, Elijah, and some others of their ancient prophets; but they felt that the miracles were a proof of His Divine mission. They could reciprocate the feeling of Nicodemus when he said, "No man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." Our Saviour assures His disciples that as the Father had sent Him, so He was about to send them. He thus transferred the power of working miracles to His immediate followers, that their ministry might be confirmed by the signs which should accompany it, and be established by those miraculous evidences. As miracles are a suspension or a counter-action of the laws of nature, Divine power is absolute in their performance, for no one has the power of disorganizing the order of fixed laws but the Author of those laws Himself. Christ and His apostles having been endowed with the power which they possessed is an incontestible evidence that as the former so were the latter sent from God.

But we shall enquire more especially—

II. In what particulars do the works of the believer excel the works of Christ? "Greater works than these shall he do." The excellency does not consist in the imposing magnitude of the works, nor in the Divine energy necessary to render them effectual, but it must be in the different aspects taken of the works themselves.

1. The dispensational changes required of the operation of

the believer's works render them greater than Christ's. He was born of a woman and *under the law*. During His life He observed the regulations of the ceremonial law; He lived and died subject to the ordinances of the Mosaic economy. The Christian believer is "not under the law, but under grace." After our Saviour's resurrection from the dead the dispensation was changed, and His ascension to heaven was the epoch of a brighter era to the world, an era of more transcendent glory, an era of clearer light and more extended privileges, an era in which the Gentiles as well as the Jews should share the benefits of a Divine covenant. So great was the change that the Sabbath-day was transferred from the seventh day to the first day of the week.

2. The works of the believer excel in the extent of their limits. "I was not sent," said Christ, "but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." His personal ministry was confined exclusively to the Jews; even amongst them He had but few followers, the greatest number of whom we read were five hundred brethren who saw Him at once, and those were chiefly of the poorer and inferior classes of society; when the baffled officers sent to apprehend Him returned to their employers, they were justly asked, "Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him?" The son of a carpenter did not attract the faith and approbation of those who were in the higher stations of life. In giving their commission to His followers He says, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." Under the very first sermon preached by the disciples after His ascension three thousand souls were added to the Church. Those men "turned the world upside down." Not only did the inhabitants of Judea, Samaria, and Galilee flock to their standard, but Asia, Europe, and Africa were filled with their doctrines, and not many ages elapsed before they could number emperors, kings, and princes among their ranks. "Greater works than these shall he do."

3. The spiritual nature of the works shewed their excellency. Christ in working miracles operated on matter; His followers

in preaching the Gospel operated on mind : which think, you, is the most difficult to subdue ? We do not find that matter ever offered any opposition to the touch of Divine power. When it was first created God merely said, Let it be, and it was. Look at Christ standing on the deck of that little ship, in the midst of the pelting storm and raging billows, which threatened to engulf the whole into the cavern of the sea of Galilee. He merely lifted up His hand and said, " Peace, be still ;" and there was a great calm. But mind is not so submissive to a command. There is an obstinacy in the will, a resistence in the inclinations of the heart, which require an extra effort to conquer it. Christ's miracles benefited the bodies of men ; His followers aim at benefiting their souls. As the soul is of infinitely greater value, to save a soul is a greater work than to save a body.

4. The durable effects of the works of the believer render them greater. The effects of Christ's miraculous works were transient. The sick whom He healed were afterwards subject to disease, the dead whom he restored to life fell again victims to death, and were seized by the arms of corruption. The effects of the spiritual operations of His followers are permanent ; a soul once saved is saved for ever. As it is in its nature immortal, and will survive the wreck of nature, so will the salvation obtained by the Gospel be co-existent with its being. Time is the measurement of all material operations ; eternity itself will be the measurement of spiritual works. " Greater works than these shall he do."

III. We have the reason why the works of the believer are greater than the miraculous works of Christ. " Because I go unto the Father."

Two important sequences were dependent upon Christ's ascension to the Father.

1. It was a pledge of the descent of the Holy Ghost to earth, by whose agency the works of the believer were to excel. On a subsequent occasion He tells the disciples, " Nevertheless, I tell you the truth, it is expedient for you that I go away :

for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." By the outpouring of the Holy Spirit the apostles were not only endowed with power to perform miracles, but also both they and their successors were to be made the instruments of spiritual conversion; sin was to be dethroned, righteousness was to be established, and Satan, the prince of this world, was to be bound over to the judgment of the last day. Christ came into the world to lay the foundation of His Church, but He appointed His followers to be the builders, under the direction, and by the aid of the Spirit, after His departure from the world. Thus it pleased His wisdom to do more by the hands of His weak servants in the world than He was pleased to do Himself. Amazing wonder! the disciple in this respect appeared to be above his Master.

2. His going to the Father was an assurance of His constant intercession near the throne of heaven in behalf of His people. His work upon earth was confined within certain limits, and to a certain few; in heaven He secures the universal success of all the prayers and the operations of those who trust in Him. He *ever* liveth to intercede. In the next verse He says, "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye ask anything in my name I will do it." Having finished the work which was given Him to do upon earth, all power and authority were invested in Him, so that all things were to be at His command for the promotion of the welfare of those whom He purchased with His own blood. No prayer of theirs shall be left unanswered, no spiritual effort of theirs shall be left unblest. Yes, brethren, we have a security in His intercession in heaven, and the operations of the Spirit upon earth, that all things shall work together for our good; and being steadfast and unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.

The Twenty-sixth Sunday after Trinity.

EVENING SERVICE.—Eternal Punishment—Mark ix.

Verse 44.—“ *Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.*”

IN perusing the pages of sacred scripture, we find that the eternal world is presented to us as two great provinces, perfectly distinct and solely separated from each other. One of these provinces consists in happiness, the other in misery; the one in joy, the other in sorrow; the one in light, the other in darkness; the one in perfect enjoyment, the other in utter destitution. That we may be induced to desire the one and to dread the other, we find that the strongest language which art can devise, and the most vivid figure which nature can supply, are employed to describe them respectively. For instance, heaven is portrayed by a city of pure gold, like unto clear glass, its foundations being garnished with all manner of precious stones, having a wall of jasper, twelve gates of pearl, and a street of transparent glass. It is called *paradise*, for its beauty and pleasantness. It is said that there thrones, and crowns, and sceptres, and royal robes, and harps of gold are provided for all the inhabitants; not that those things actually exist according to our notion of them, but they are employed figuratively to meet our faint ideas of comfort, and elegance, and happiness. On the other hand, hell is compared to a prison, where there are chains, and scourges, and fire and brimstone, and the smoke of their torments ascending up for ever and ever. Thus, the most desirable objects in nature are employed to describe the bliss of the redeemed, and the most repugnant things to describe the torments of the condemned. Hence our Saviour in

speaking of the punishment of the wicked says, "Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." The metaphor is evidently taken from Isaiah lxvi. 24. "And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcases of the men that have transgressed against me; for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh." The prophet had here one of two images in view, that is, either the Valley of Hinnom, or the scene of a field of battle. The Valley of Hinnom was formerly a pleasant valley on the east of Jerusalem. Here the idolatrous Israelites erected at one time an image of brass, and devoted themselves to the worship of idols, offering their children in sacrifice at the horrid shrine of the god Moloch. (2 Chron. xxviii. 3.) After the return of the Jews from the captivity of Babylon, they regarded this valley as a place of peculiar abomination; and the dead carcases and filth of the city were deposited there, and it was not unfrequently the place of execution; it became, therefore, extremely offensive. The air was polluted and pestilential, and to preserve it in any way pure it was necessary that fires should be kept continually burning. The extreme loathsomeness of the place—the corruption of the atmosphere, and the lurid fires blazing by night and by day, made it one of the most appalling and terrific objects with which a Jew was acquainted. It was called "the Gehenna of fire," and was the image which our Saviour often employed to denote the future punishment of the wicked. Or probably the image is taken from a scene where the people whose lands had been desolated by invading armies, were permitted to go forth after a decisive battle to walk over the field of the slain, and to see the dead and putrifying bodies of their late formidable foes. Those bodies in which worms were already generated, they gathered together in heaps, and kindled fires, partly to consume the carcases, and partly to preserve the air from pestilential influences. The prophet, by the instruction of inspiration, foresaw that the number should be so great that the worm—the worm feeding on the dead should not die, as long as there

were carcases to devour, and that the fire used to burn the bodies of the dead should not be extinguished until the whole should be consumed. The figure, therefore, denotes great misery as well as certain and terrible destruction. In our text it is applied to the state beyond the grave, and is intended to denote that the destruction of the wicked shall be awful, widespread, and eternal.

Our first enquiry shall, therefore, be, What are we to understand by this worm and this fire? and secondly, The duration of the torments inflicted by them.

I. What are we to understand by this worm and this fire? Are we to understand that there will be in hell a natural worm such as is generated in a dead body, and elemental fire such as we are accustomed to on earth? We cannot conceive this possible: the language is solely figurative. The *worm* implies the remorse of a polluted conscience, and the *fire* implies the consciousness of the displeasure of an offended God. And what pains can be more intolerable—what torments can be more fierce—than such awful reflections incessantly gnawing the guilty soul? Remorse is a most undesirable companion in the present world. There are no pains so hard to bear—no sufferings so difficult to endure, even now, as a guilty mind; but now it is merely like cold brimstone lying on the soul, when death opens the door for sparks of Divine vengeance to enter in, then unextinguishable flames will be produced; and what language can express—what imagination can conceive—the excruciating agonies endured by the subjects of those miseries!

Connected with this fact there are a few things which may be profitably considered.

1. This worm is produced by sin. It was not generated until man became “dead in trespasses and sins.” What a world of happiness surrounded our first parents in the garden of Eden! There was nothing to mar their joy—nothing to disturb their peace: nature smiled on every side. A clear sky, a pure atmosphere exhilarated their spirits, a fertilising

soil produced all the variety which they could desire, an abundance of the most delicious fruits supplied all their wants, while a variety of the richest flowers met their eyes with beauty, and filled the air with fragrance. All things constituted to their pleasure and amusement, and the inward serenity of their minds was not surpassed by the outward calm and placid scenery around them. This was their state when sin found them; but the moment it entered, the whole scene was changed: confusion and misery took the place of harmony and happiness; vice dethroned virtue; thorns and briars took the place of fruit and flowers; a sordid downcast overspread the countenance that was before so frank and serene, and the worm that never dies, being bred in the soul, Adam and Eve fled to hide themselves among the trees of the garden from the presence of the Lord. Yes; from that day to this sin has been the precursor of guilt, and guilt has been the inevitable consequence of sin.

2. The size of the worm is commensurate with the magnitude of the sin. Hence the declaration of Christ, "And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself," &c. (Luke xii. 47, 48.) Though we know that every sin is a transgression of the law, and that he who offendeth in one point is guilty of the whole, there is no such thing as a small sin: every sin is mortal; every sin is damnable; yet, a repetition of sin adds to the accumulation of guilt, and consequently, to the accumulation of punishment. It is thus God's justice will be vindicated in the final distribution of punishment. Every man shall bear his own burden. When the child of ten years old dies unpardoned, he shall have a sufficient load of guilt to make him for ever miserable, but it will be light in comparison with the burden of that wretch who lived threescore years and ten in a continued series of crime and wickedness. This is a most solemn part of the subject; for if a man be determined to die impenitent, it would be inconceivably better for him to die this moment, than to live additional twenty years in a course of sin. For every year, every month, every week, every day will add to

the amount of his criminality, and thus tend to aggravate his guilt. Christ says again that it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for Chorazin and Bethsaida. But why? It is because the number of their advantages and privileges was greater than that of Sodom, &c., which teaches also that our guilt and punishment hereafter will be in proportion to our privileges here. The guilt and punishment of the heathen will be in proportion to the light which they possess, and so shall ours. "Of how much sorer punishment suppose ye shall he be thought worthy," &c. (Heb. x. 29.)

3. The worm lies dormant in the soul until the mind becomes convinced of the evil of sin, and the danger to which it exposes the sinner. St. Paul "was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived, and he died." The worm slept in the bosom of Belshazzar when he sent for the sacred vessels of the Lord's temple to drink wine therein with his princes, his wives, and his concubines; but when he saw the fingers of a man's hand writing upon the plaster of the wall, "Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin," the slumbering worm was aroused, and it made "his countenance change, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another." In vain were all means tried to relieve him. The queen with all her art and eloquence endeavoured to soothe him. She said, "Let not thy thoughts trouble thee, nor let thy countenance be changed," and perhaps added, "It is a strange language which thou canst not understand, it may contain nothing of consequence, and if it does it may not relate to thee." He might have answered, "There is a voice within me which speaks louder than ten thousand thunders that there is something terrible embodied in that writing, and that something, I feel persuaded, pertains to me!" What was that but his hell commencing on earth; and before the return of another day's sun, he had to feel the full realization of the worm that dieth not. Judas' conscience was at perfect ease when he betrayed his Master, and sold

him for thirty pieces of silver, but after Jesus was taken and condemned, he felt the force of his guilt, and he could say when it was too late, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood."

4. This worm is not transferable from one soul to another. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son. However a parent may transfer disease into the constitution of the children, and there can be no doubt but that a great amount of the misery and distress which exist in the world are handed down from one generation to another, but that guilt which has been generated in the bosom of the parent is not, cannot be transferred to the bosom of the child. It will be confined to the soul in which it was generated, and unless cleansed by the blood of Christ, it will enter with that individual into a future state, and rankle in his own breast for ever and ever.

We have to bewail the wretchedness of that condition into which we have been reduced by the sin of Adam. What a long train of natural and moral evils has flown into the world through the floodgates which were thrown open by the first transgression. The effects of Adam's sin have heaved the infant breast, have bent the manly heart, and have levelled venerable age with the dust; but we must remember that the *effects* and not the *guilt* of that sin we are doomed to suffer. We trust that Adam's crime was pardoned through the promised seed; but, until then, his guilt lodged within his own bosom, and no other individual ever has, or ever shall suffer in the world to come for his crime.

We may also add, with reverence, that when our blessed Redeemer suffered for sinners, *He did not suffer their guilt*. "He who knew no sin was made sin for us." "He bore our griefs and carried our sorrows." "The chastisement of our peace was laid upon Him." It is beyond the comprehension of finite man to enter into the nature of our Saviour's sufferings. His tortures were doubtless inconceivably more excruciating than it was possible for a world of finite beings

to suffer ; still they must be of a different nature from the sufferings of the lost, as guilt is of such a nature that it must be confined of necessity to the soul of the transgressor.

Finally, there is nothing which can destroy this worm but the blood of Christ alone. We must all confess ourselves guilty, and we can find nothing in this world which can take away that guilt. Nothing that man has ever done, and nothing that he may be ever able to do, can remove the guilt from the conscience ; all the forces that he may be able to bring cannot take away the stain from the soul, nor destroy the worm which gnaws in the heart. This will flourish in every soil, it will live in every climate, it will breathe in every atmosphere but that of Calvary ; there the monster cannot exist—there the reptile is slain—there the worm is poisoned. For “the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.” It takes away the deep stain of guilt so effectually that God pronounces His Church to be fair—*all fair*, “not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.”

Let me—

II. Bring before you the duration of this worm, and this fire. “Where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.”

Oh brethren ! what an important change death must be, a change after which there will be no change. In whatever state it finds us, it leaves us. If righteous, righteous still ; if holy, holy still ; but if unjust, unjust still ; if guilty, guilty still. There is no change of disposition in another world ; if this worm and fire be allowed to come in contact with each other, to separate them will be impossible ; whilst the one continues to exist, the other will continue to burn. The worm must be destroyed before the fire can be quenched, and the soul must be annihilated before the worm shall perish. Is your soul immortal ? then it must live for ever. Shall it live for ever ? then the worm will for ever feed upon it. A change of worlds can no more alleviate the sorrow of the mind than a change of places in this world.

The man who has imbrued his hands in the blood of a fellow-man, may have escaped detection, and may have fled from the hand of justice; but whither will he go to escape the piercing pangs of his conscience? He may step on board of a steamer and cross the Atlantic; he may ascend in a balloon and fly on the wings of the wind; he may enter a cave and hide himself from the eyes of mortals; but the downsinking melancholy of his soul will haunt him in every retreat. Then, when that man enters eternity, and is placed in his everlasting dungeon, the same ghost will follow him still, but with a multiplied power of torment. You may ask will God, who is represented as gracious and merciful, punish for ever for the short time which man has sinned in this world? This may be answered by asking another question: Is guilt commensurate with the time which is taken to commit the deed? Is it so in the calculation of any man? Is it so in the estimation of the civil law? Does not our law convict a person of penal servitude for seven, for ten, for twenty years, even for life, for a crime which did not take him five minutes to perpetrate? Has not God a right to carry out the same principle? He has, and He will do it, but in so superior and more rigid a manner as His law is superior to all human laws. Let me ask again is the time of sinning short? will the impenitent cease to sin in hell? He cannot love God there, and if he will not love Him, he will hate Him: that will add to his criminality, and consequently to his guilt, so that instead of being diminished it will continue to increase. The very fire that will burn the soul, will feed the worm. "Where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." Oh! eternity, eternity! who can fathom its depth? who can climb to its summit? who can span its latitude? who can measure its longitude? It will be one endless drag of unmitigated misery to the ungodly; everlasting midnight shall pervade throughout the whole region without a glimmering hope of a dawning day; age after age may be imagined to roll on, thousands of thousands of imaginary years may be multiplied by millions of millions;

still not one item nearer the close than the first moment the condemned soul enters its dreadful prison. Inasmuch as it bears within itself the cause of its own misery, its hell cannot be separated from its existence. "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal." God forbid that any who may read these sermons, should enter into eternity unforgiven. May I urge all, in the last line, to flee now to that Saviour who "is able to save to the utmost all that come to God through Him."

THE END.

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Matthews, Rev. Thomas, Vicar of Cilycwm	-	-	-	1
Maxwell, Captain Heron, Sketty	-	-	-	1
Morgan, Rev. J. W., Incumbent of Beaufort	-	-	-	1
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Price, F., Esq., Rhiddings, „	-	-	-	1
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Salmon, The Misses, Clifton	-	-	-	1
Steele, Mrs. Robert Finnart, Greenock	-	-	-	1
Struve, Mrs. W. P., Coed Park, Cwmafon	-	-	-	1
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Taylor, J., Esq., Castle Square, „	-	-	-	1
Walsh, J., Esq., Ida Villa, „	-	-	-	1
Williams, Ven. Archdeacon, of Carmarthen	-	-	-	1
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